ピアノの森 18

一色まこと

モーニング KC 1917

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一色まこと

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The Perfect World of KAI

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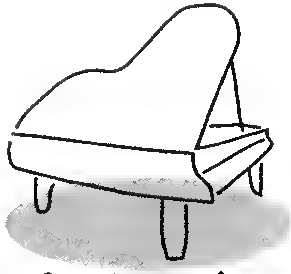
ISSHIKI Makoto

The Perfect World of KAI

18



The Perfect World of KAI

18

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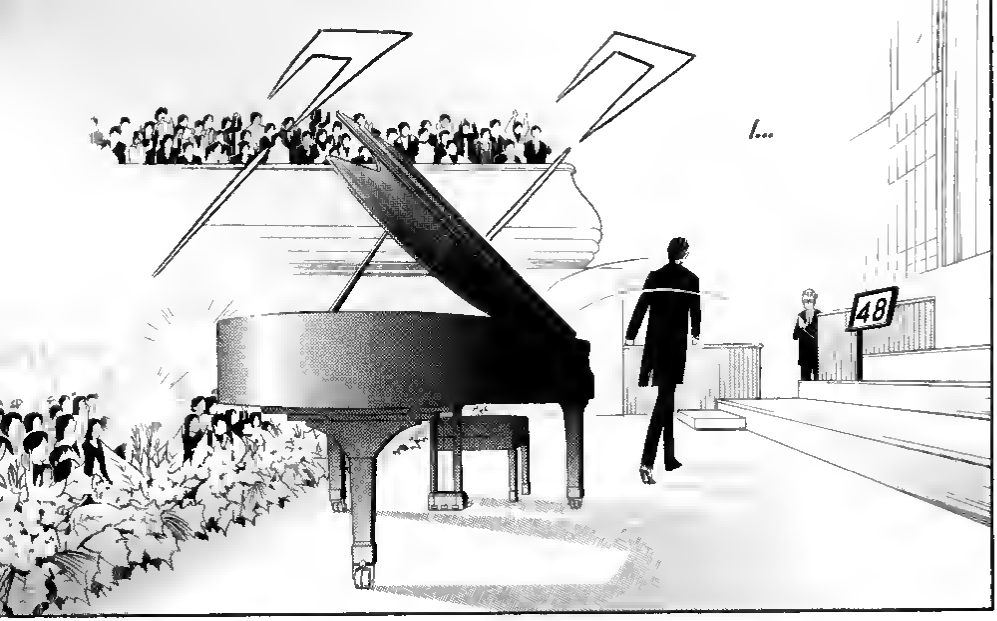
THIS IS A WORK OF FICTION
ANY RESEMBLANCE TO ACTUAL PEOPLE ORGANIZATIONS AND/OR EVENTS IS PURELY COINCIDENTAL

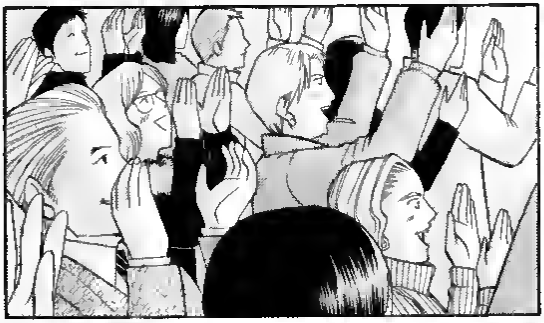
My hands just started clapping on their own.
You're awesome, Wei Pang!
Awesome!
Just awesome!
When I shift my gaze...

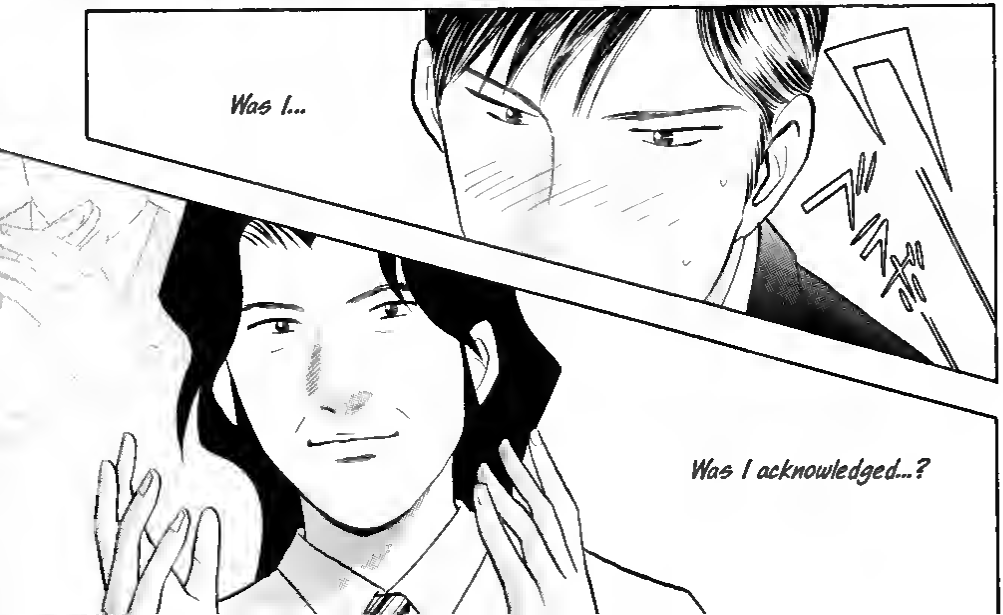
Chapter 157

Reaction to the "Original"

ワアア


I...
48

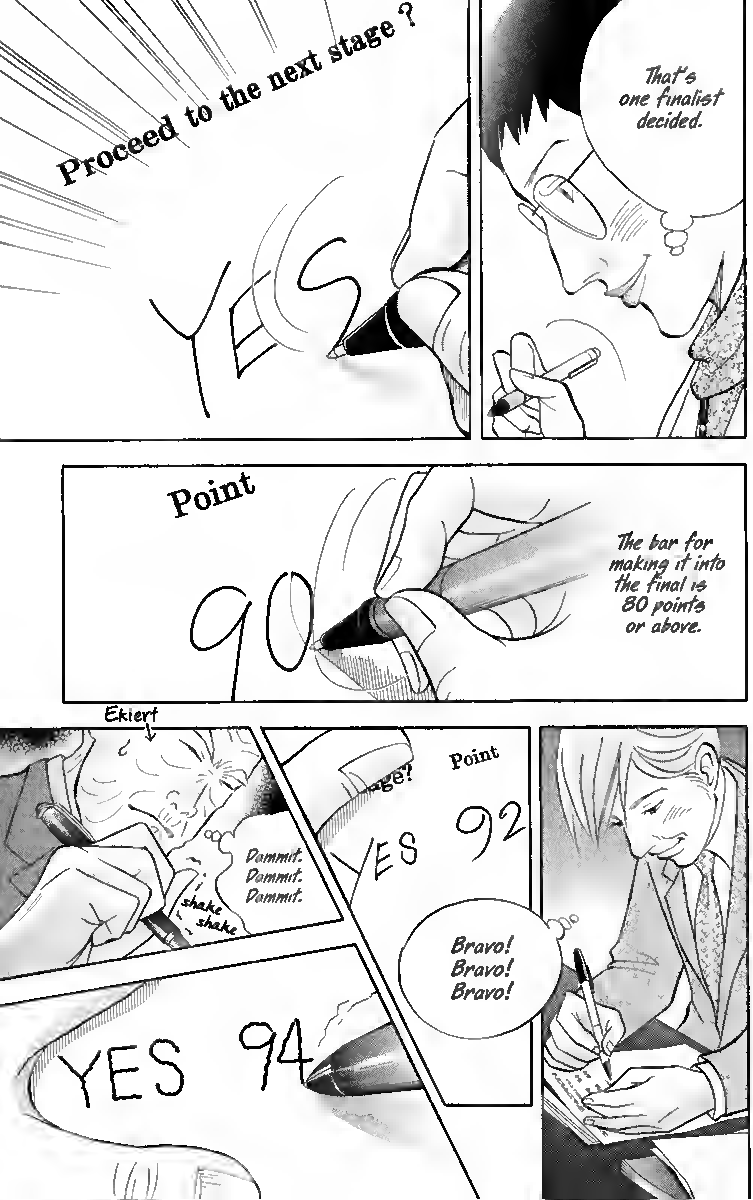



Was I...
Was I acknowledged...?

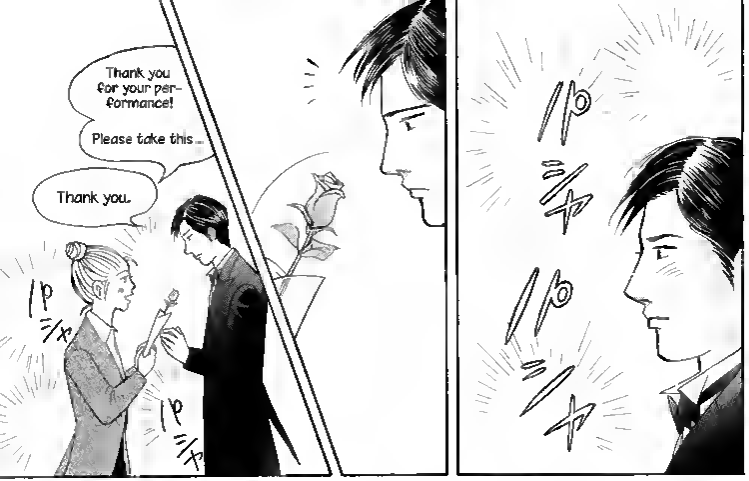
Thank goodness!
His hand seems to be fine.

But I'm seriously out of luck...
To be followed by such a fantastic performance...

His performance really was impressive.
Sophie Ormesson, who played before him, has been completely blown to pieces.


Proceed to the next stage ?
YES
That's one finalist decided.
Point
90
The bar for making it into the final is 80 points or above.
Ekierf
Dammit. Dammit. Dammit.
shake shake
Point
YES 92
Bravo! Bravo! Bravo!
YES 94

What the? Why is this guy yelling like mad...
Bravo- ooooo!! Encore!!
You're amazing, Wei Pang!
I actually found a pianist other than Ichinose that I'd want to follow for the rest of my life!
Besides...
You're certainly not just a cheap, knock-off version of Ajino.
There's no way you could be a mere copy when you've reached this level.
ENCORE!!!
The techniques are similar, but not the emotions.
You are fundamentally different.
He rose to a real


Thank you for your performance!
Please take this...
Thank you.
パニャ
パニャ
パニャ
パニャ

May we have an interview, please, Mr. Pang?!
Please give us a few words!

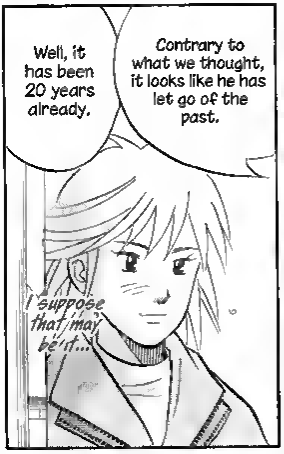
So, how was it? Pang's piano was a huge shock, eh?
ワワワ

I admit it's very similar to mine...
But speaking just in terms of technique, he's actually better than I was back then.
Haha...
Yeah, it did give me a start!
Then is he better than Kai as he is now?
It's true though!
Your Japanese is showing!
Eh... How modest of you!
Were to...?
For now, Pang does have the upper hand in terms of technique...
If Kai were to win...

Luck!
...Is what he needs.
Eh? What about the next one?
Well then, let's head back!
Bingo!
Ahaha! Yep, yep, that's it!
My thoughts exactly!
I made a lunch reservation at a restaurant yesterday. Kai has already promised to come.
Didn't I tell you? Today's event was only to get you to listen to Pang's piano.

That was beyond everything I imagined.
Emotions may not be something that can be mimicked...
But for his piano to be so similar to Ajino's in terms of technique...
And for him to be so attuned to Sonata No.2...
Just what kind of suffering had Wei Pang gone through...
Anyway...
It was right for Shuhei to choose Sonata No.3

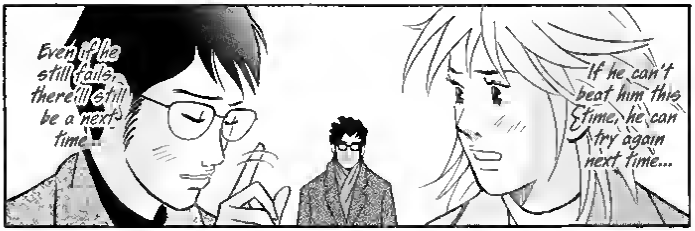
FILHARMONIA NARODOWA


Well, it has been 20 years already.
Contrary to what we thought, it looks like he has let go of the past.
I suppose that may be it...

Aśino-sensei smiled, didn't he?!
Yeah.

Amamiya, it's finally gonna be your turn tomorrow, huh?
Nothing will go wrong.
I didn't choose Sonata No.2, after all.
It was pure luck though.
Haha, ditto!
Ah...
If...
Shuhei...
and Ichinose...

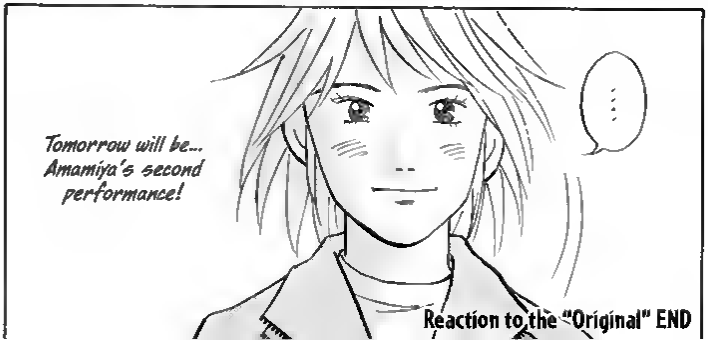
He wouldn't feel that this competition is his one and only chance!
If Shuhei really wanted to settle things with Ichinose-Kai out of his own will...


Even if he still fails, there'll still be a next time...
If he can't beat him this time, he can try again next time...

You're supposed to compete with your rival throughout your entire life... and brush up your own skills while doing so.

See ya!

That's what a rival is for!
Ah!


Tomorrow will be... Amamiya's second performance!
...

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PIANO NO MORI

by ISSHIKI Makoto
一色まこと

If you like this manga please support its creators by buying a copy of the original book.

Piano no Mori ch 157

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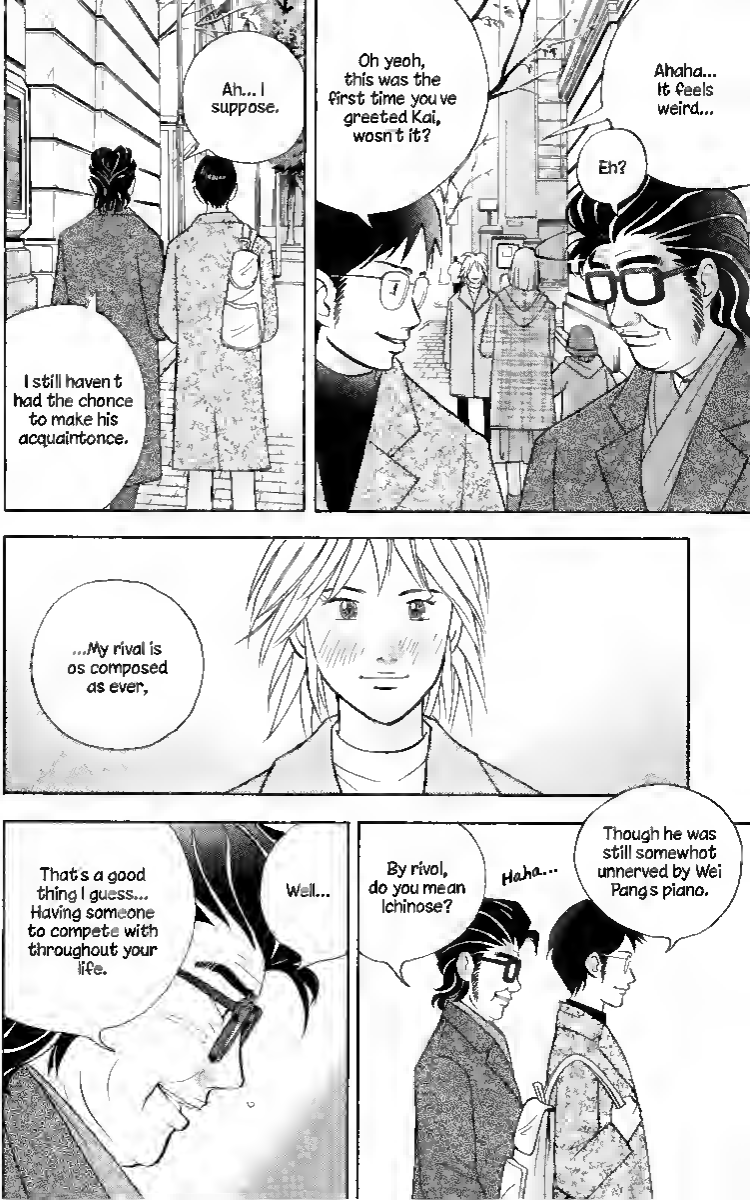
Artwork from "Piano no Mori"

Chapter 158

How I Feel, Right Here, Right Now

Youichirou,
Could you be...
.....
Trying to fight a proxy war through your son?

Sorry, Father. Have I kept you waiting?
Ah no, I just got here.
Whoa...
bow
It's the world-famous Amamiya Youchirou!
"The Healing Piano"!


Ah... I suppose.
I still haven t had the chonce to make his acquaintonce.
Oh yeoh, this was the first time you ve greeted Kai, wosn t it?
Ahaha... It feels weird...
Eh?
...My rival is os composed as ever,
That s a good thing I guess... Having someone to compete with throughout your life.
Well...
By rivol, do you mean Ichinose?
Haha...
Though he was still somewhot unnerved by Wei Pangs piano.

Sorry, but I'm not that naïve!
This is a fateful showdown.
What's the matter, Father?
Ever since I encountered Kai at that elementary school...
I've wanted to have this showdown with him right here.

I...
I intend to settle it once and for all here.

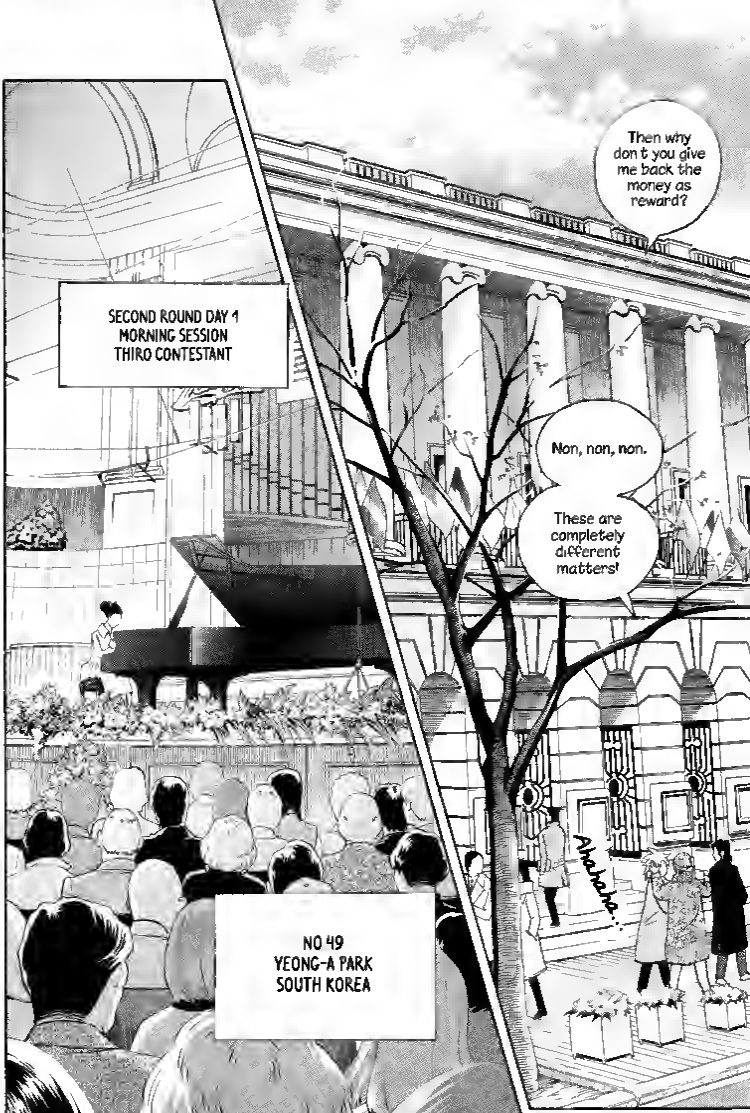
Yeah! Thank goodness I am not on the same day with Wei Pang!
You have to get past tomorrow's second round first.
Ahaha...

Somehow...
When those two are together, they really look like celebrities...

It'll finally be Amamiya's second performance tomorrow!!
Damn. I'm getting nervous.
They seem really unapproachable...
I've never given it much thought, but Amamiya...
...Is actually the only son of Amamiya Youichirou...
Here come the pair of mundane-looking celebrities...
Ah...
Kaaai!

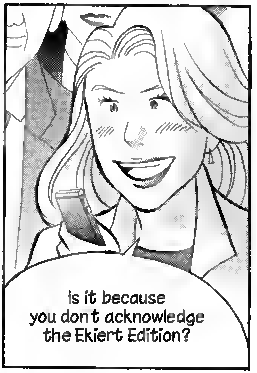
Well then, 1 zloty from Sousuke.
*POLAND'S CURRENCY 1 ZLOTY ~ 30 YEN ~ 0.3 USD
But it's 2 zloty for Kai!
Ehh!?
Well... Sousuke didn't do a double take after listening to Wei Pang's piano, but he was still quite shocked, so I'm just taking half the stakes.
Of course. It was a bet!
Ehhh?! You're really taking it?!
Oh dear. My 2 zloty...
Seriously ... Don't acknow-ledge it so readily!
But Sousuke did admit it's "similar"!
Kai's bet was on "he'd still be surprised, but he'd deny it's "his own piano"".

Well then, Kai!
What do you think about Wei Pang's performance today?
So Kai made a bet as well...
Thank you very much!
Today's performance was even more ferocious...
Uh...
Yeah! I'm feeling all pumped!
I want to be on that stage right now!
Perfect answer!
Excellent!

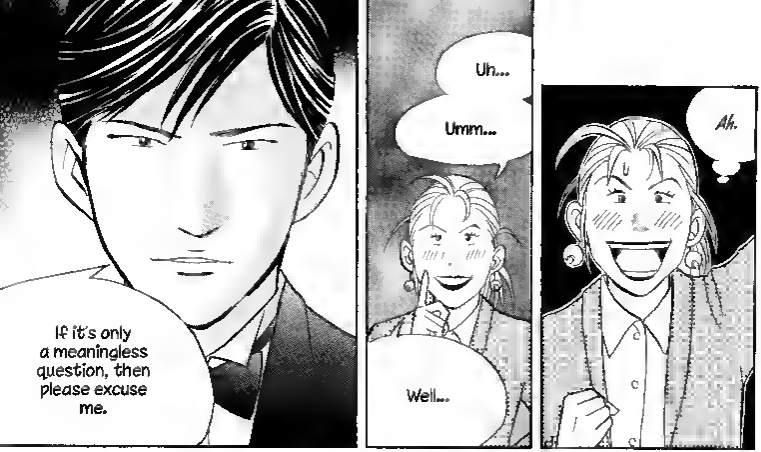

Then why don't you give me back the money as reward?
Non, non, non.
These are completely different matters!
Ahahaha...
SECOND ROUND DAY 1
MORNING SESSION
THIRD CONTESTANT
NO 49
YEONG-A PARK
SOUTH KOREA

Mr. Pang, one last question...
Why did you switch the order when playing the mazurkas?

No... I just want to stay true to my own idea of art...
I didn't mean it any other way.


Is it because you don't acknowledge the Ekiert Edition?

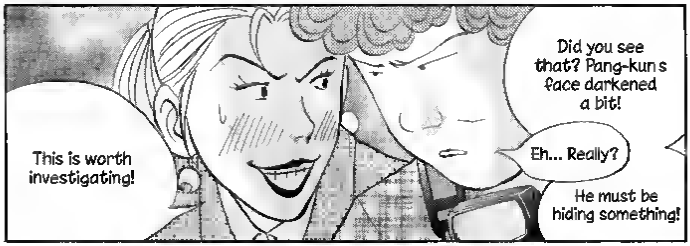
J...Just One more!!
Are we done?
If we go on, there'll be no end to this.
What would you do if you couldn't play the piano?!
I don't understand your question...
I did it! I asked him a question!


If it's only a meaningless question, then please excuse me.
Uh...
Umm...
Well...
Ah.

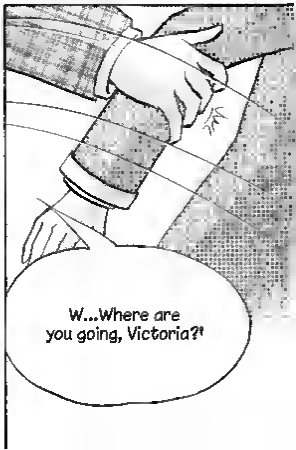
Was that a bad question?
Who knows...
Eh?

Come here, David!

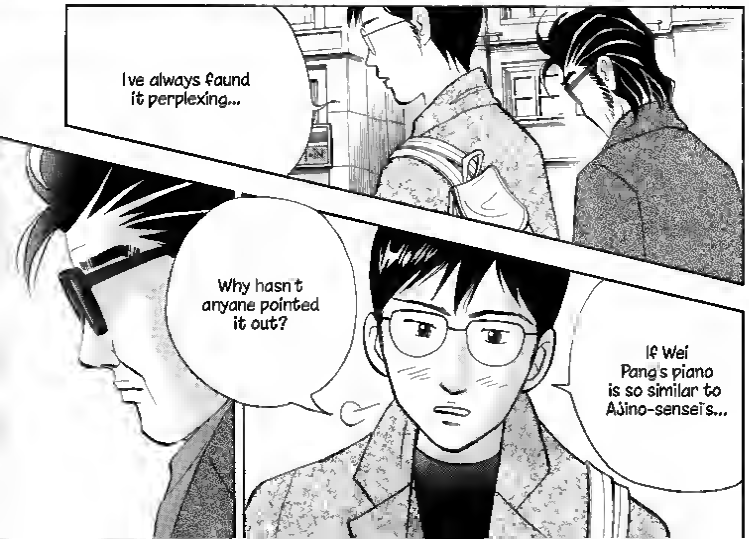
I couldn't ask anything about music since I'm just an amateur~
There was no hidden agenda!
Ah... That question was meant to be taken literally...


This is worth investigating!
He must be hiding something!
Eh... Really?
Did you see that? Pang-kun's face darkened a bit!

Eh...
There are still 7 other contestants playing today!


W...Where are you going, Victoria?!

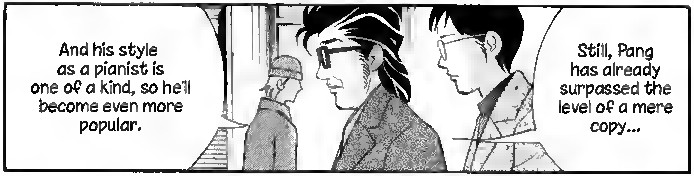
If... If I couldn't play the piano...


I've always found it perplexing...
Why hasn't anyone pointed it out?
If Wei Pang's piano is so similar to Ajino-sensei's...

There are only articles praising Wei Pang everywhere I look...
?
What's the matter, Father? You're spacing out...
Uh...
Ah... Sorry about that! I was listening though.
Well...
That's just because Ajino's piano isn't that well-known.
CHOPIN

Perhaps,
If Ajino had died in that accident...
Regret and grief over the loss of his piano would've probably spread all over the world...
It's not a nice thing to say, but if that had been the case, he would have been hailed as a tragic hero and become highly acclaimed.
But since the tragic hero is still alive, people would avoid the matter out of pity and sympathy.
Of course, the hardcore fans would notice the resemblance...
It's taboo to touch that kind of sore spot... So naturally, he faded away.
CHOPIN

But now, even when Ajino's piano is already lost...
They'd still rather have Ajino back than accept a counterfeit.


And his style as a pianist is one of a kind, so he'll become even more popular.
Still, Pang has already surpassed the level of a mere copy...

Ajino himself would probably feel a bit hurt...
But that's just how it is.

Father...

Father, perhaps sensei...

He isn't haunted by his own piano anymore...
...Isn't suffering as much as you think.
Perhaps he...
CHOPIN
Because sensei now has Kai...

But... If I can defeat Kai...
Then what's haunting us...
That's why, Father...
...Will definitely disappear.

We are no longer bound by anyone's piano...
I will not lose.
SECOND ROUND
DAY 2

How I Feel, Right Here, Right Now END

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PIANO NO MORI

by ISSHIKI Makoto
一色まこと

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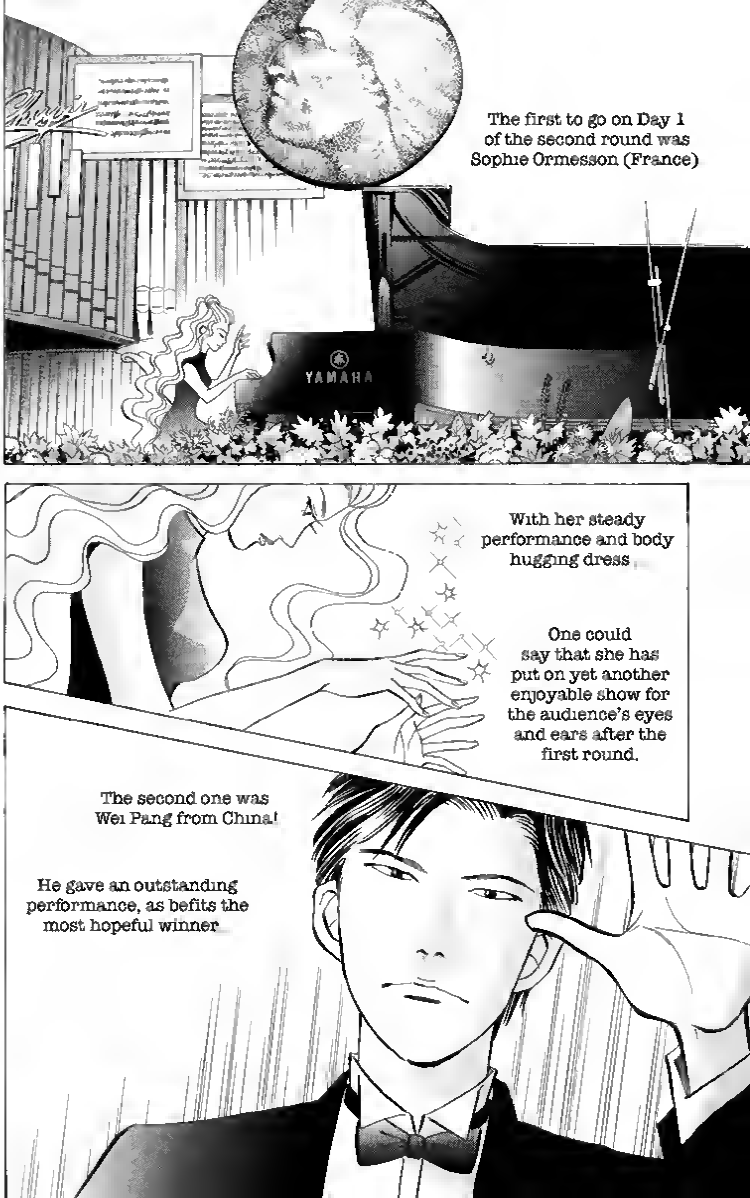
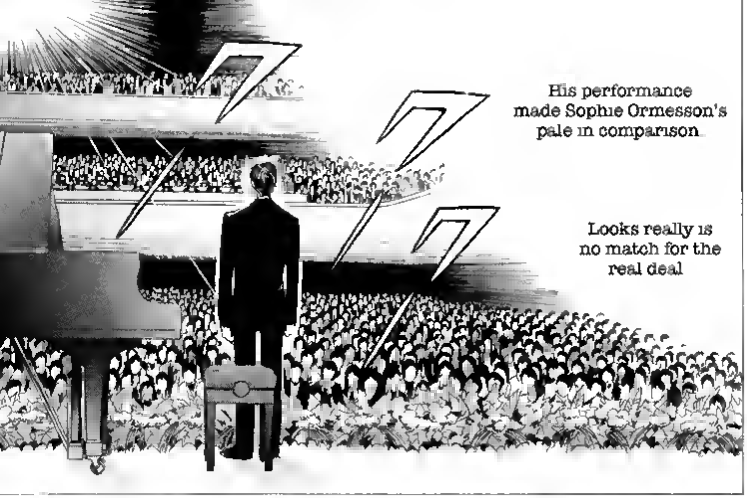
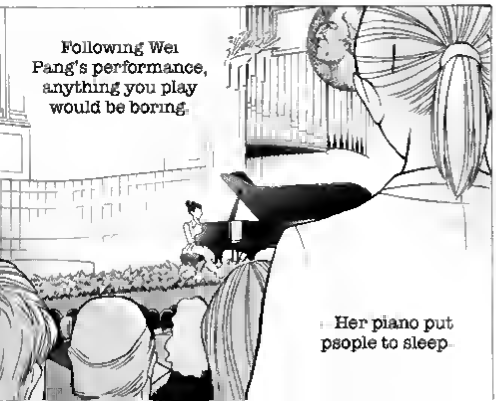
Chapter 159

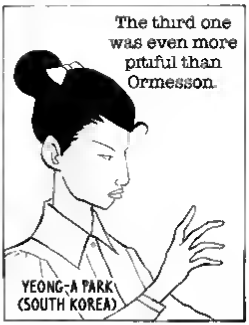
What the Defeated Left Behind


The first to go on Day 1 of the second round was Sophie Ormesson (France)
YAMAHA
With her steady performance and body hugging dress
One could say that she has put on yet another enjoyable show for the audience's eyes and ears after the first round.
The second one was Wei Pang from China!
He gave an outstanding performance, as befits the most hopeful winner


His performance made Sophie Ormesson's pale in comparison.
Looks really is no match for the real deal

.....
I want to have a whole, separate paragraph detailing his performance.


Following Wei Pang's performance, anything you play would be boring.
Her piano put people to sleep.


The third one was even more pitiful than Ormesson.
YEONG-A PARK (SOUTH KOREA)

The first contestant in the afternoon session, the fifth on Day 1 was no different.
The fourth one was also plain and sleep-inducing
The sixth one was just as tedious ..
SAYAKA TADA (JAPAN)
JACOB TABORI (USA)
YUKIE SASAKI (JAPAN)
The seventh was different!! My eyes finally opened!!
AUBREY THEISS (GERMANY)
She was more masculine than anyone in terms of both appearance and performance Her dynamic music swept away the drowsiness in the auditorium in an instant

And so, we've entered Day 2...
sip...
And Day 1 ended on a disappointing note with the ninth contestant...
TOBIAS WOLFF (AUSTRIA)
The next one, the eighth contestant, was so-so.
PAWEL WAGNER (POLAND)
The third one also frowned a lot... And she wore a huge flower.
MINORI YOSHIZAWA (GERMANY)
The second one played with a scowl on her face...
KACHEL WU (USA)
The first one wore a baggy dress...
CHIEN-YING WU (TAIWAN)
However, the last one in the morning session, the fourth contestant, stood out!
Her technique is outstanding, which goes without saying. She also has a lot of fans since she's given a lot of performances in the past.
OLESHA YUSHCHENKO (UKRAINE)

The morning session ended with the first standing ovation to be heard on Day 2.
"That's it"?
That's it!
"This kind of crap can hardly be called a news article" was what the boss roared on the phone last time.
Victoria, isn't this even worse than the article about the first round?

Humph
Oh, is that all?
If you want it to become a proper article, take some Pulitzer-worthy photos for me.
Look, we've been through this many times already...
What's the point in writing clichéd stuff you see in professional music magazines?
You dolt. We Brits hardly ever give a damn about this sort of piano competition.
And that's only natural, since all 5 of the British contestants failed to pass the preliminary round.
We are a professional music magazine.

There's no need to report every single performance in detail to begin with.
We just have to write about several contestants that stand out in an interesting and sensational way...
We should write things that interest the readers!

Heck no! As if I'd do that myself!
I'm leaving such things to a correspondent based in China.

That won't do. Even if you say so...
You're about to head over to China to dig up stuff about Pang, aren't you?

SHANGHAI

Seriously... Victoria is so bossy.
Dammit. Nothing good ever comes out of working with her.
Wow... So tall..
HAAA
Anyway, the highlight of today's afternoon session is Amamiya Jr!
I have to get him to give an interview!
But why does the afternoon session start at 5pm?
They should just call them the day session and night session.

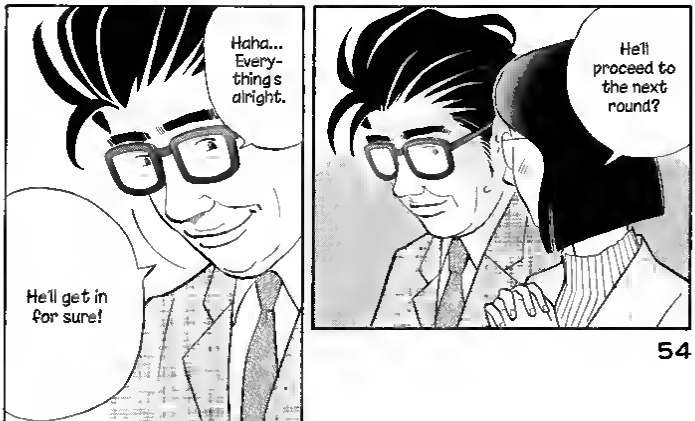
DAY 2 AFTERNOON SESSION
FIRST CONTESTANT
NO 80
KRISTOF ZEISSLER (POLAND)

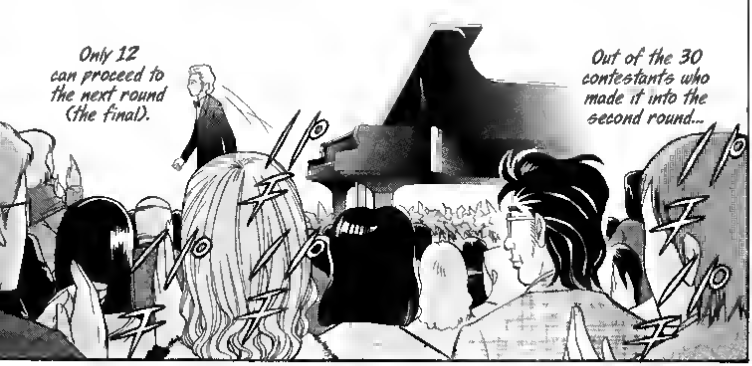
パチパチパチ
Yo...

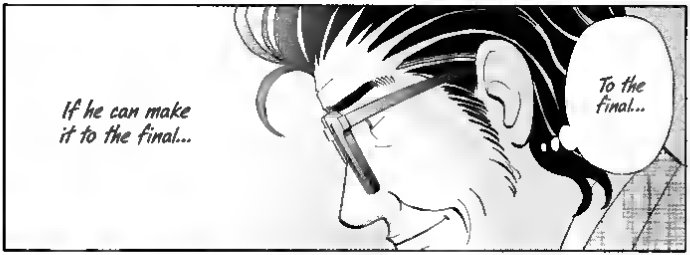
Are you sure you don't want to keep him company?
Youichirou-san, it's finally Shuhei-san's turn!

I see...
That's why I asked the crew to postpone the filming of the documentary to some other day as well.
He said he wanted ta concentrate alone this time...

Youichirou-san,
Shuhei-san is going to be fine, right?

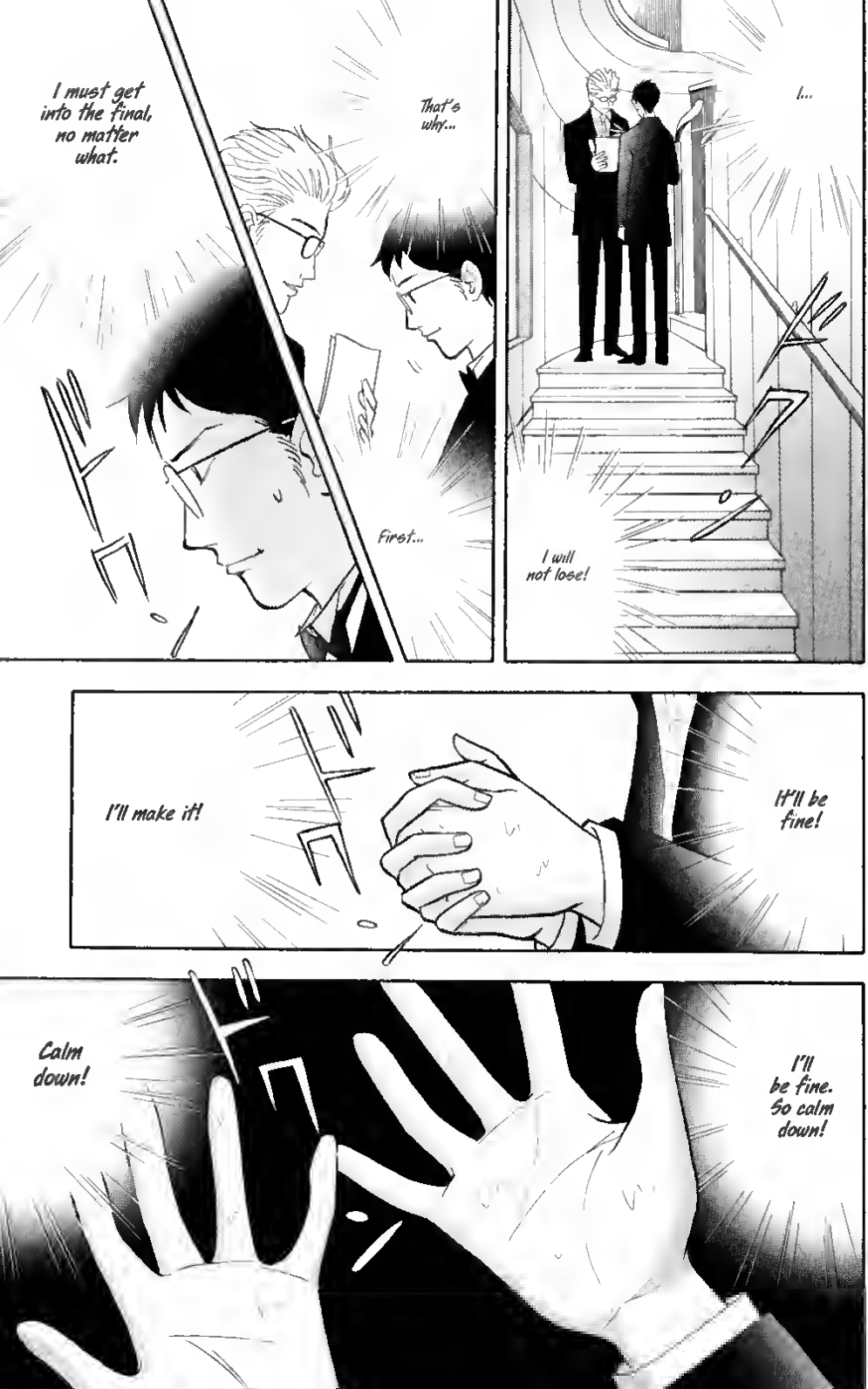

Haha... Everything's alright.
He'll get in for sure!
He'll proceed to the next round?


Only 12 can proceed to the next round (the final).
Out of the 30 contestants who made it into the second round...


If he can make it to the final...
To the final...

As long as he can make it to the final...
パチパチパチパチ

Will be saved!
Shuhei's honor...
Then whatever the final result is...
ドクン
ドクン


I must get into the final, no matter what.
That's why...
First...
I...
I will not lose!
I'll make it!
It'll be fine!
Calm down!
I'll be fine. So calm down!

...Is myself!
The selling point of your piano is you yourself, Amamiya!
The selling point of my piano...
You're everything to it.

It's alright Adamski.
The one who brings the piano to life is you!
You get it?

All that I am.
スゥ
I will give the piano...
What the Defeated Left Behind END

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PIANO NO MORI

by ISSHIKI Makoto
一色まこと

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Piano no Mori ch 159

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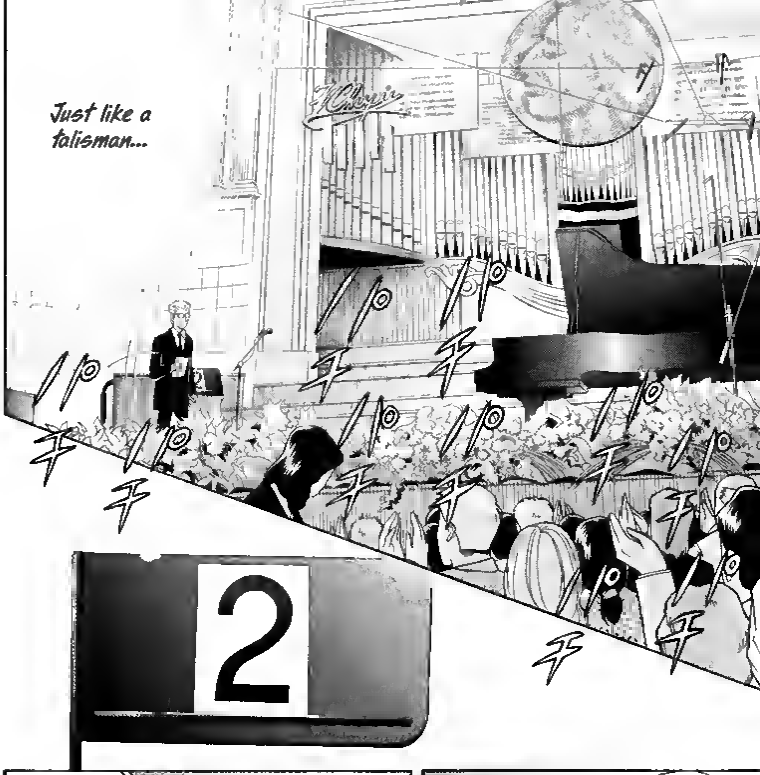
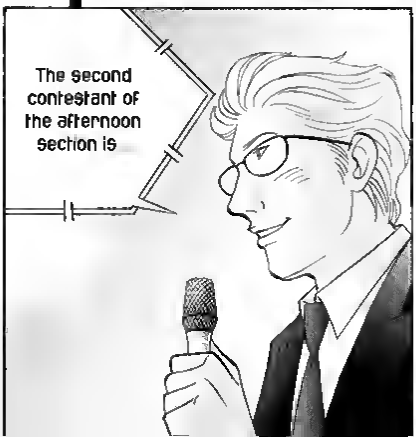
Chapter 160

What This Music Is For

But...
I'm okay!
My hands are sweating.
My legs are shaking.

Ever since then, Adamski's words...
Have saved me...
Ever since that day...
You get it?
The one who brings the piano to life is you!
From the inexplicable anxiety fits which would hit me several times a day.
They keep me on the right track...


Just like a talisman...
2


The second contestant of the afternoon section is

Yo... Youichirou-san,
It's finally Shuhei-san's turn.

No 2
Shuhei Amamiya,
Japan!

Oh! It's Amamiya Junior's turn!
His set list is

I wonder why Adamski's words are still ringing in my ears...
Mazurkas, Op.59,
No.1 in A Minor;
No.2 in A Flat Major;
No.3 in F Sharp Minor;

The piano is ultimately only an instrument.
The ones doing the expressing are supposed to be us, Amamiya!
Just about anybody can make simple sound on the piano.
Even a cat sitting on the keyboard.
It's just a simple matter of physics.
What Adamski said...
Wasn't anything new or special...
Even if all the notes are played correctly... A bland performance goes against the very essence of the piece.
Using all sorts of ways...
If you don't play with your heart, if your music contains no soul, then no matter how good your technique is,
You won't be able to move people's heart.
Many have said the same thing...
They have tried getting this idea through to me...

Once you've reached your limit, you can only aim for the technically challenging pieces.
But with only technique, then no matter where you go, technique is all it'll ever be.
Of course, not having any technique is out of the question
Their words just went in one ear and out the other...
But I never listened.
Sonata No 3
In B Minor, Op.58,

His piano of choice is...
Steinway.
Polonaise No 7
In A Flat Major, Op 61 "Polonaise-Fantaisie".
No.2,
Shuhei Amamiya,

Japan!

You...
Why do you play the piano?
I just want more people to listen to my music.
You couldn't just be playing it for the sake of your own incarcerated self, right?

ピチ
ピチ
ピチ
ピチ
ピチ
ピチ
ピチ
ピチ
ピチ
ピチ
ピチ
ピチ

You're here in this hall, right?
Kai,
パチパチパチパチパチパチパチパチ
You must've come.

You have definitely...
WHOA
Come to listen to me play!
So...
Sorry!

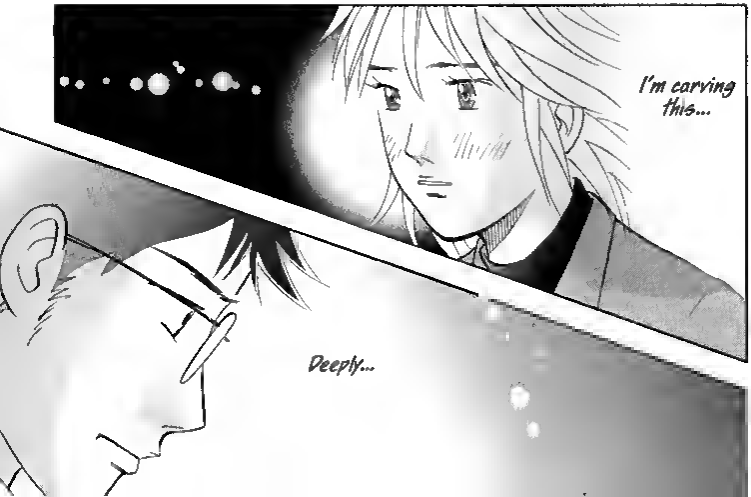
I should be the one to apologize!
I didn't look where I was going.
Huh?
A...Adamski?

It's okay even if only a handful of people are listening...
Kai!

Right now,
I'm playing
for you...

I'm putting my soul into the piano.

MAZURKAS, OP.59
NO.1 IN A MINOR


I'm carving this...
Deeply...

Deeply...
Deeply...

Into
your
memory.

Ah...

What This Music Is For END

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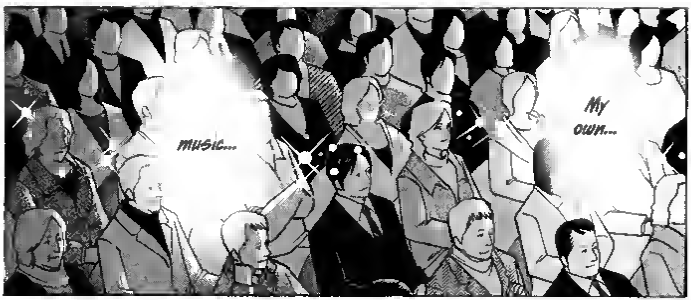
Chapter 161 Awakening

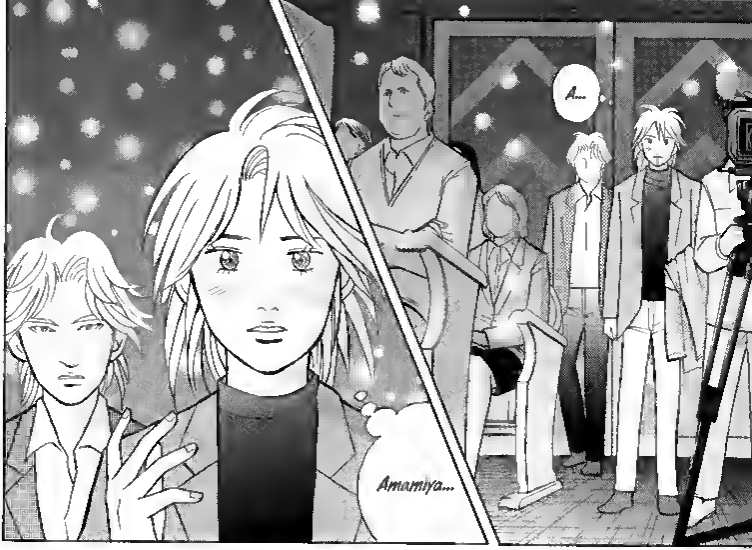
It's...
The sound I'm making on the piano...


music...
My own...

It's...

In these 17 years...
The proof that I have lived...

Music that is mine alone.


A...
Amamiya...

Such a smooth entry...
It's beautiful.

It's almost like he composed the piece...
To be able to play Chopin's unique modulation so naturally...

....

Ah...
These notes...

This...
Reverberation...

This melody

Ah... This feeling...
This feeling of synchronization...

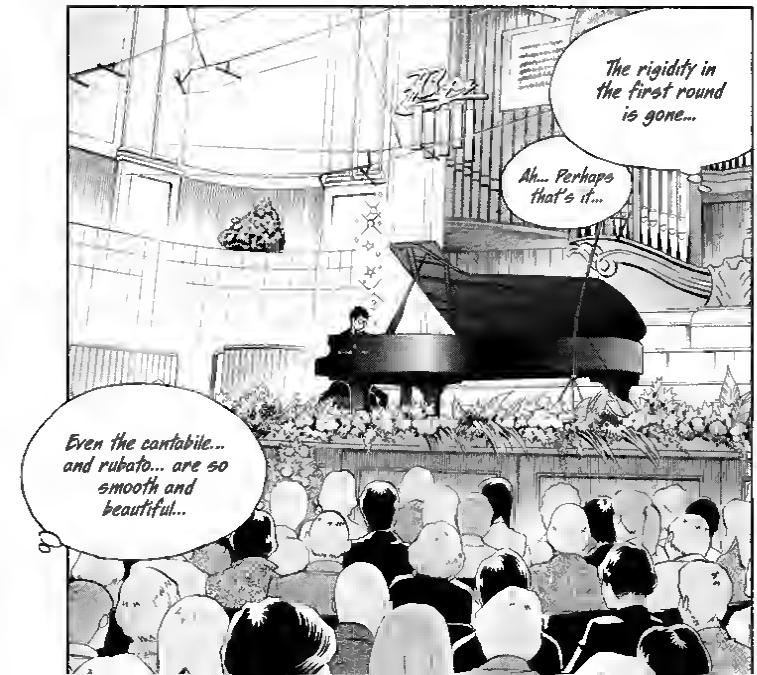
Kai, have you always...
Been having this sensation?
I'm connected with the piano.
Ah... Right now...

Ahh...
Right now...
The piano and my soul have definitely...
No...
Even further back...
No... Back then...
You've already mastered this since back then...?
Ever since that time...

Become one.

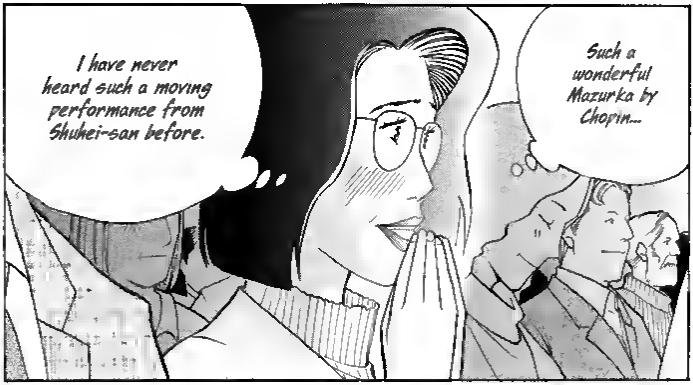
First encounter with the piano.
This is Amamiya's...

He's already fine.
Haha... I worried for nothing, huh.


The rigidity in the first round is gone...
Ah... Perhaps that's it...
Even the cantabile... and rubato... are so smooth and beautiful...

Hmm... He's good indeed.
Was his music this free in the first round?

Not bad, Amamiya...


I have never heard such a moving performance from Shuhei-san before.
Such a wonderful Mazurka by Chopin...

I guess.
Yeah...

H-Haney! Shuhei-san's piano has completely changed, hasn't it?

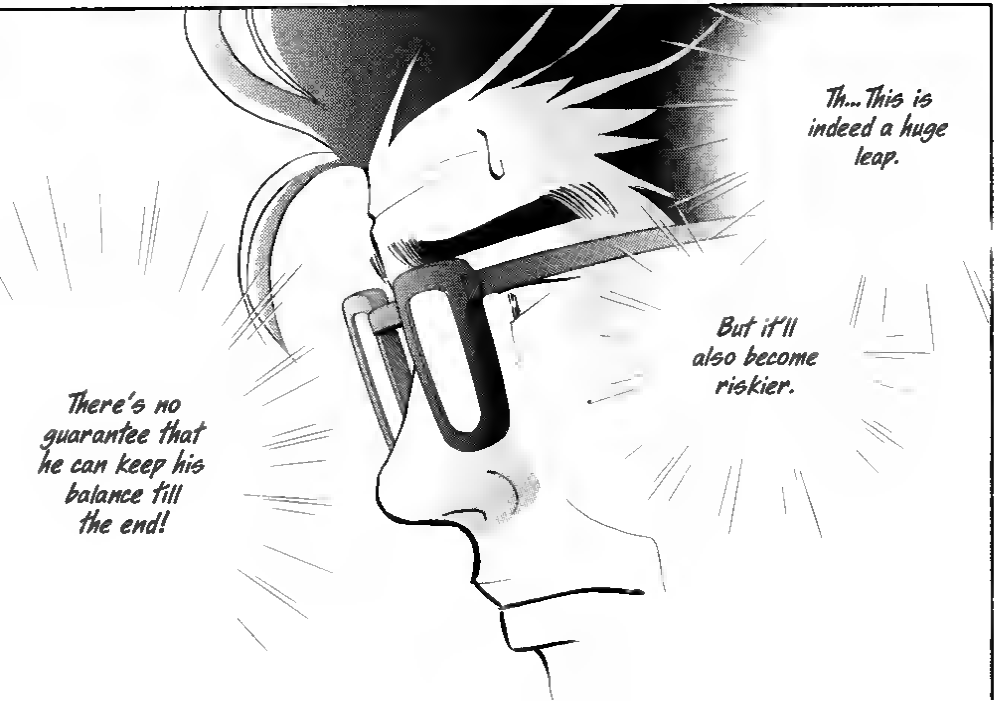
Shuhei has never played the piano this way before...
He could never get so engrossed in a piece.
But... What is this sense of foreboding?
This also happens to be an obstacle that Shuhei has never been able to overcome in all these years.
Wonderful!
The dynamic of the rhythm is nicely entwined with the melancholy...
His piano has changed completely after the first round. Such lyricism...

Looks like... he has finally awoken as a pianist.
I'm glad for you, Youchirou!
And he did it on this very stage!!

He could've changed at any other time but now!
But...
He shouldn't have... Not right now...

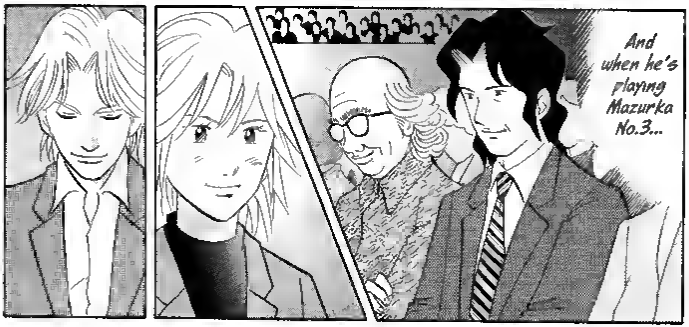
This is a competition!

And sometimes they'll push pianists to grow rapidly.
That's why competitions are so scary.
Ah, this is surprising...
Technical perfection is already enough to be a selling point...


Th... This is indeed a huge leap.
But it'll also become riskier.
There's no guarantee that he can keep his balance till the end!

Shuhei...
It's dangerous!
Snap out of it!

Relishing the transformation in his playing.
Shuhei is...


And when he's playing Mazurka No.3...

Comes true...
The thing that I've been dreading...
Awakening END

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by ISSHIKI Makoto
一色まこと

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Artwork from "Piano no Mori"

Don't lose yourself in the performance!!
Shuhei!
This is amazing, Father!
Father!
This feeling of being one with the piano...
This thrill...

Chapter 162 The Piano That Is Mine Alone

Shuhei!
He started...
The...
Calm down!
Way too loudly.
The tempo has sped up!
Is he riding on the momentum built up in the previous piece...?
The tempo has quickened?

But it's charming in its own way.
It sounds natural.
But the passage and the extension of the notes are both exquisite
Hmm? It's a bit too quick...
Oh, this is amazing... His stout heart is on full display.
Not to mention, this is my version.

The timbre...
It's the first time I've seen him so engrossed in a performance..
It's...
What beautiful music!
Ah.. The timbre is wonderful.
But the mistakes are troubling...
This is a competition!

Just now... Did I press a wrong key?
Ah... My tempo is a bit too quick?
This is my music.
Nevertheless, This...
I'd be...
If I let go of it now...

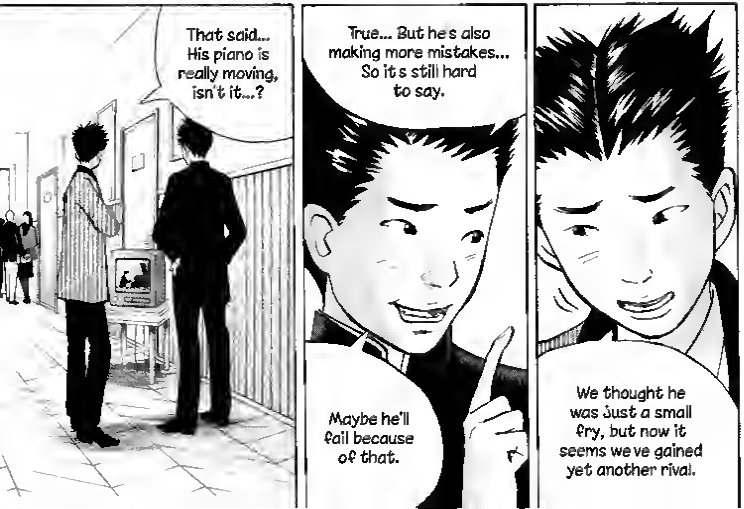
Right now, you're pouring your very own heart out to the audience!
Not bad, Amamiya.
Don't let the mistakes bother you!!
You're awesome, Amamiya.

And that's the most important thing!
Because music is just like any other language...

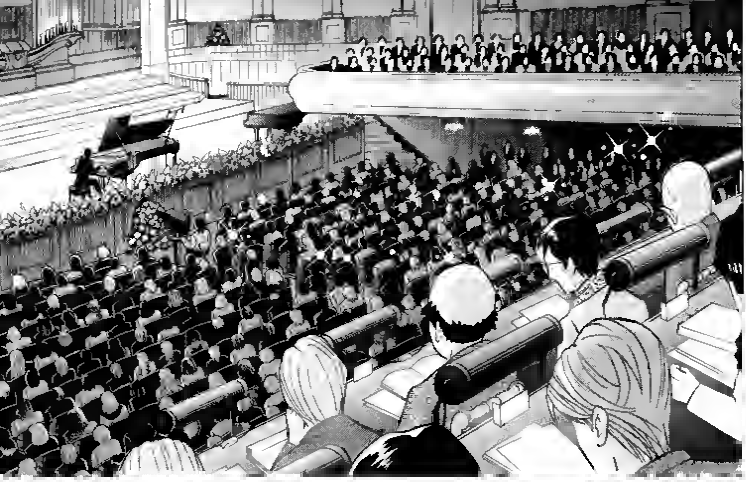
You are expressing Chopin...
In your own very words!!

By doing so, your message will definitely reach people's hearts...
Ah...
It will certainly reach them.
Tsk. He settled down!
Ah... His tempo has stabilized.
It's stabilized!

But man, I'm surprised.
For Amamiya Junior to change on this very stage...
What an unlucky guy, huh?
Haha... You mean lucky!


That said... His piano is really moving, isn't it...?
True... But he's also making more mistakes... So it's still hard to say.
Maybe he'll fail because of that.
We thought he was just a small fry, but now it seems we've gained yet another rival.

Ahh...
Right now, I'm playing "My very own piano".
I never knew that being one with the piano...
Is such a happy feeling.

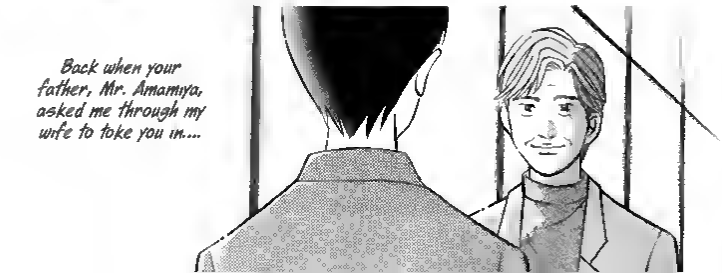


That's what it means to "play as if Chopin himself is sitting right in front of you".
That's it!
Keep it up, Shuhei.

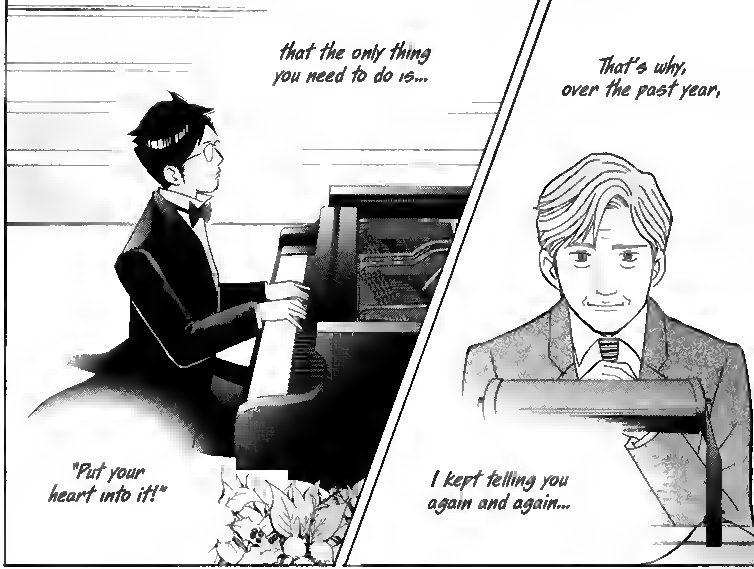
Just as Chopin is here as a person,
You, too, have to "be here" as a person.

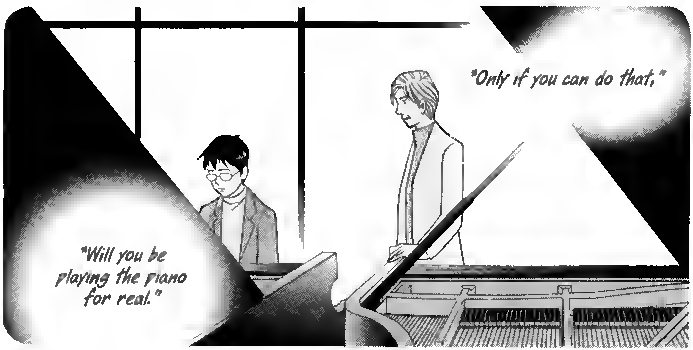
I didn't expect you to finally grasp the key that you haven't been able to all these years...
Right here on this stage

To be honest,
I disliked you when we first met.


Back when your father, Mr. Amamiya, asked me through my wife to take you in....

And when I first heard you play...
I knew right away that your piano was the boring kind...
I was thoroughly annoyed.
The kind of poised but cliched playing often found on second-generation musicians, huh...
With only techniques and no imagination at all.
You are still the most hard working...
And eager student that I have ever taught.
However,
No matter how I put you down or brushed you off...


that the only thing you need to do is...
That's why, over the past year,
"Put your heart into it!"
I kept telling you again and again...


"Only if you can do that,"
"Will you be playing the piano for real."

"Just a year..."

"That's a bit rude of you.
I have been listening properly"
"If not a year...
Then at least, just this moment..."
"Just a year will do... Please listen to my piano properly, even for just a year!"
Shuhei! Today is the first time...
I genuinely want to teach you.

Kai!
This is the piano that is mine alone...
Are you listening?
Chopin that only belongs to me...
POLONAISE-FANTAISIE IN A FLAT MAJOR, OP61

Can it reach...
Your heart?

I'm... so glad to have met you.
So glad to have known your music, Amamiya.
Amamiya...
It's truly a wonderful thing...

To have been born in the same era as you...
To feel so happy, listening to you play...
ポーン
ポーン
To have met you...
And to be able to listen to such lovely music...

I'll never...
Ever forget this piano.

I will remember
this all my life.

The Piano That Is Mine Alone END

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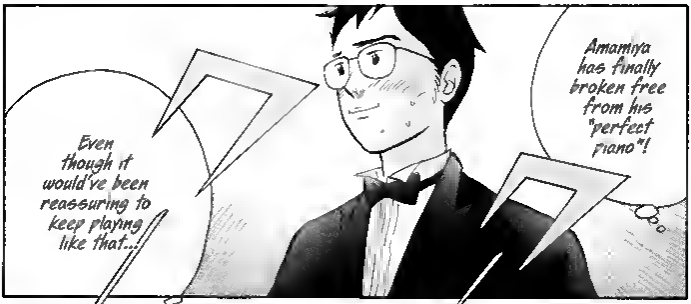
"My own piano"!!
But I've finally mastered...
It's true that I made some mistakes.

Chapter 163 Doubts

It's so moving...
To witness the moment when a youngster grows from a contestant into a pianist...
Amamiya... Great, isn't he? He's amazing!
Yeah! We've got to come and watch him in the final!!


Even though it would've been reassuring to keep playing like that...
Amamiya has finally broken free from his "perfect piano"!

But that's how art is supposed to be!!
And there'll certainly be risks when expressing individuality...

There's Kai, and there's Amamiya Jr. All these young artists!
Japan's future is bright indeed!
Yeah. I look forward to his performance in the future.
Wonderful playing! It's quite different from his father's...
They mean the same thing to me!
Haha.
He aims at being a professional pianist.
As what, then?
Kai has never seen himself as an artist though.

He really looks like a star now!
Shuhei-san is so awesome! ♡
Shuhei...

This is the first time Shuhei learns the joy of being a pianist...
Ah, that's it....
What kind of face is he making?
Ahh...

But... If only it hadn't been today.
I've always known this day would come,
And I've always been looking forward to it...
I wonder what the judges would make of this?!
Mistakes... The inaccuracy in tempo and the accents were also obvious.
How will these affect his score?!

To play this well despite being the youngest one... As expected of Amamiya Jr...
Point
next stage?
84
YES
The passing line (Yes) in the second round is 80 points...
He played my version, you know.
Point
Point
And his performance made it shine!
Point
86
This performance was the best first step for Amamiya Shuhei to take as a pianist!
Isn't this great, Youichirou?!

Ah well, he did make mistakes...
Paint
YES 80
But he won't score higher than China's Pang, will he?
Isn't that nice,
To have found your favorite Japończyk (Japanese)?
Still, the showdown between him and Pang in the final be a thrill.

パシャ
パシャ
パシャ
Dammit...

To give you a toilet break. Just let it go.
Why did they have to call for a 30-minute recess now?!
As if I'd pee myself.

Ahhh. Saved by the recess, huh, Amamiya...?
What a lucky bastard!
I could've wiped away the echoes of his newly awakened piano...
With my piano though...

That was amazing! You're the best!
Shuhei-san ♡
Really, Father?
Yeah, it was good.
You mean it? Did you notice the change in my piano?
'Course I did.
But why now?

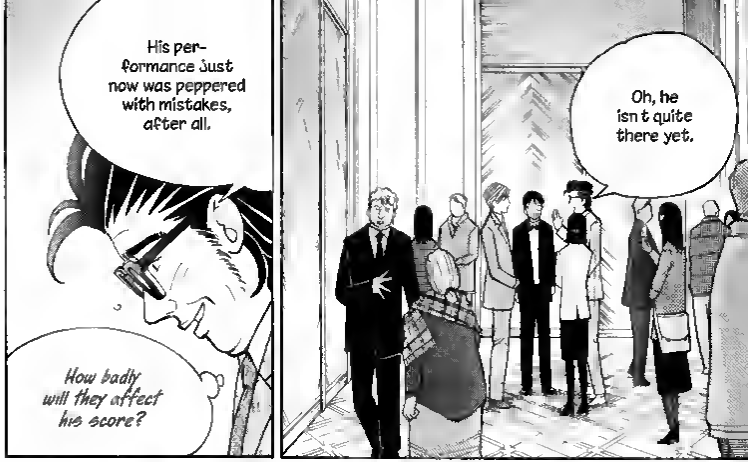
What could have happened to trigger this change?!
Ah...
Sir!
Mr. Pavlas!
Andrzej Pavlas,
Shuhei's instructor for the past year and the vice chairman of the judging panel in the competition.
Also the husband of the pianist Maria Bilinska.

Hmm.
The time has finally come... when even I have to praise you.
I'm actually a bit nervous, coming here.
Mr. Pavlas! How did I do...?
I'm not good at praising people.
You should know how I hardly ever do that.
Huh? Nervous...?
Ahaha... That's true.
Hardly...? More like never...
Shuhei! Your piano was fantastic!

It was the best piano you've ever played!
And it marked the start of your life as a pianist!

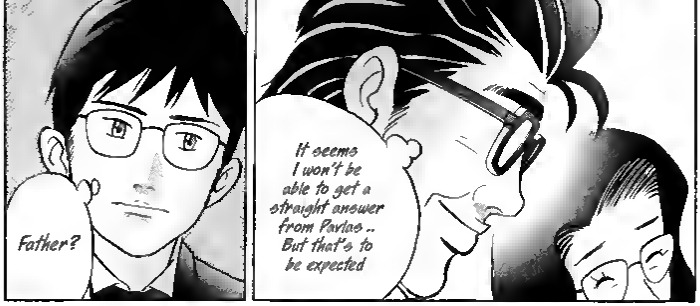
Thank you very much.
By Mr. Pavlas for the first time.
Ah.
I'm being praised...

It is an honor to finally meet you.
I had wanted to make your acquaintance in person, but I could only do it on the phone...
Mr. Pavias!
No, the pleasure is all mine.
This is the pianist... Youchirou Amamiya.
You son is truly outstanding, and I look forward to seeing haw far he'll go.
So he'll only be my student till this competition is over...
Thank you so much for taking care of our son.
You have no idea how grateful we are!

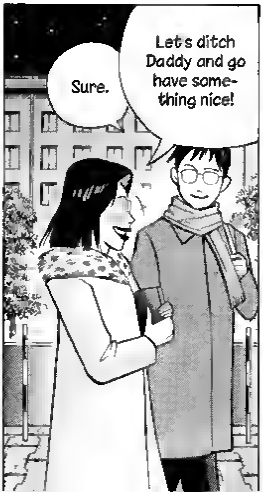

His performance just now was peppered with mistakes, after all.
How badly will they affect his score?
Oh, he isn't quite there yet.

I couldn't take part in Shuhei's adjudication, so I was merely enjoying his music.
Ahh... Is that so?

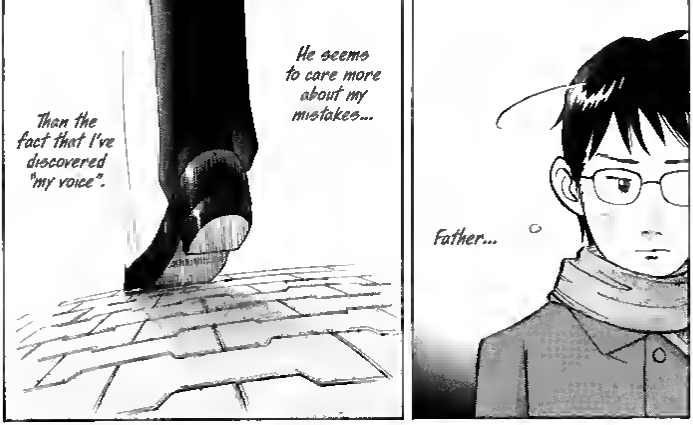
What. This man, Amamiya, cares more about the scores than his son's growth...?
Well, it's a competition after all. I guess it's not all that surprising...
He didn't make any big mistakes though?


Father?
It seems I won't be able to get a straight answer from Pavlao.. But that's to be expected

Im surprised.
Daddy actually told us to go back first cause he wanted to stay and listen to the rest of the performances...


Let's ditch Daddy and go have something nice!
Sure.

But thanks to that, Mommy gets to have dinner with you! Just the two of us!
How exciting ♡
That was unusual.
Yeah.


He seems to care more about my mistakes...
Than the fact that I've discovered "my voice".
Father...

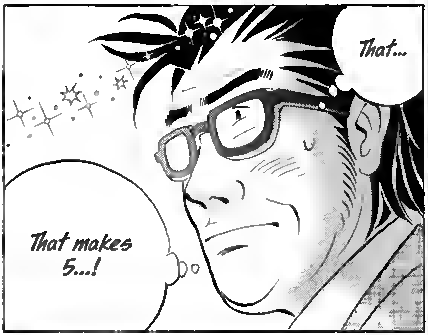
He seems...
Really troubled by them.

NO 4
CHANG WOO AN (SOUTH KOREA)

Only twelve out of the thirty contestants will move on to the final.
STEINWAY & SONS

Of course, it'd be great if Shuhei is among those twelve, but...

I didn't listen to the other ones since none of them seemed interesting... So I can't say much about them.
flip
Among those who played on the first day...
48
Wei PANG
Sophie Ormesson from France and Wei Pong from China will definitely make it.
As for today, it'll be Olesha Yushchenko from Ukroine, the last to play in the morning session...!
78
Olesha YUHCHENK
That already makes... 4...
Judging from the critiques and their achievements...
62
THEISS
Aubrey Theiss from Germany will probably stay, too.
Eh?
Whoa


That...
That makes 5...!

Doubts END

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PIANO NO MORI

by ISSHIKI Makoto
一色まこと

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Piano no Mori ch 163

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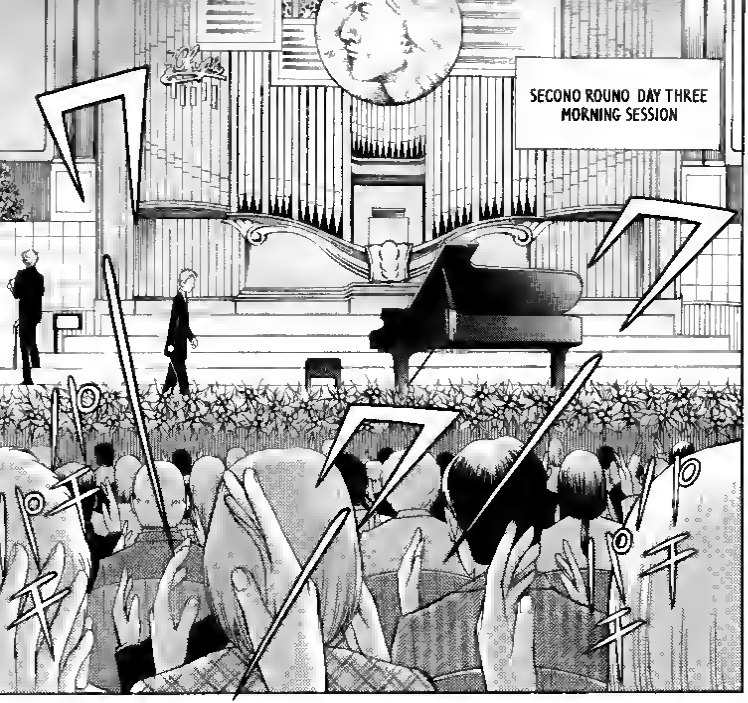
Gazeta

Shuhei Amamiya

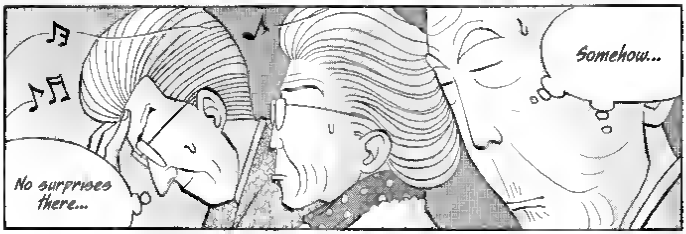
Chapter 164

Anxiety / Distrust

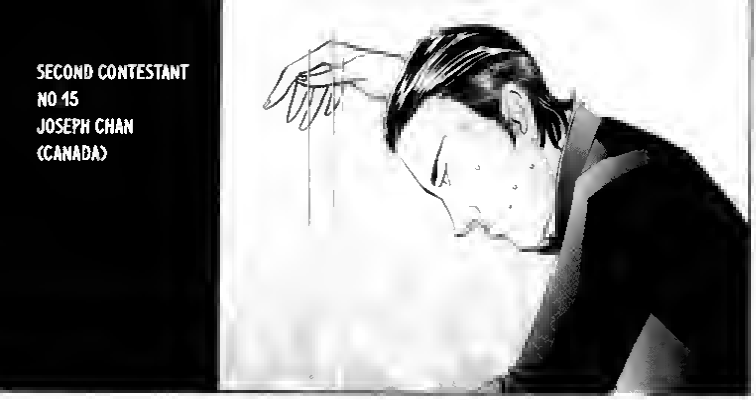
Gazeta
Shuhei Yoshino
While Shuhei took up the cover.
Gazeta
In yesterday's competition gazette,
Chang-Woo An and Olesha Yuehchenko were featured on the inner pages...
I guess I should take this back and show Shuhei...


SECOND ROUND DAY THREE
MORNING SESSION

That's some loud cheering.
FIRST CONTESTANT
NO 9
MAREK BALAZS (POLAND)
Oh... A Polish contestant, I see...

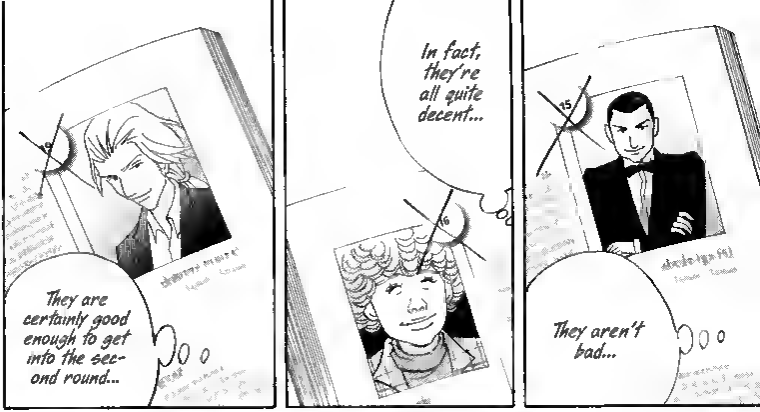

Somehow...
No surprises there...

He's not bad...
But he isn't good enough for the final...

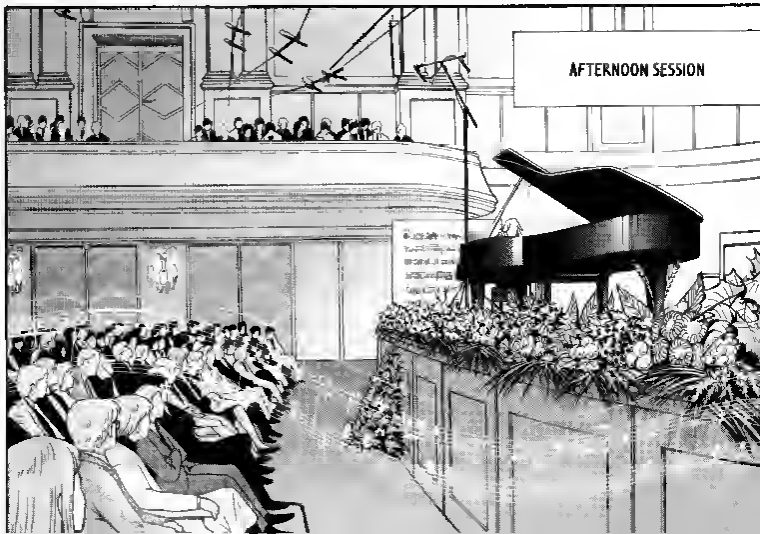

SECOND CONTESTANT
NO 15
JOSEPH CHAN
(CANADA)

THIRD CONTESTANT
NO.16
ALEKSEY CHERNOV
(RUSSIA)

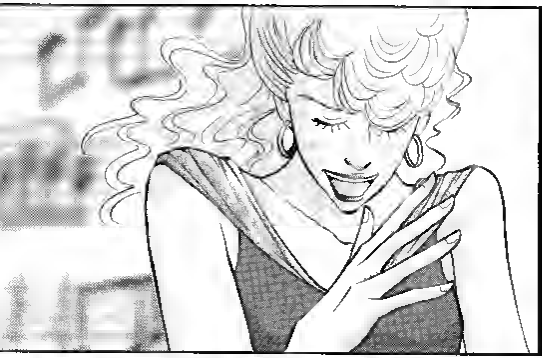
FOURTH CONTESTANT
NO 19
LUIS OAHL
(USA)


They are certainly good enough to get into the second round...
In fact, they're all quite decent...
They aren't bad...

But people won't want more of them.


AFTERNOON SESSION

FIRST CONTESTANT
NO.22
EVGENII DMITRIEV
(RUSSIA)



SECOND CONTESTANT
NO.25
MONIKA DUKACZEWSKA
(POLAND)

THIRD CONTESTANT
NO.31
JAN GARDOCKI
(POLAND)

キャ

Hey, David.
Why are they making such a fuss?
Was it that good?

So rowdy. Did he bring his cheerleaders along?
Most of the students standing are probably his friends.
Or maybe he's some kind of a local star.
Tsk.
JACEK HOFFMAN (HARSH CRITIC)
They actually kept these inept Polish contestants... Looks like Adamski's elimination will cause another stir...
That's just blatantly flaunting their home advantage.
Why do I have to keep listening to Poles playing such horrendous music...
31

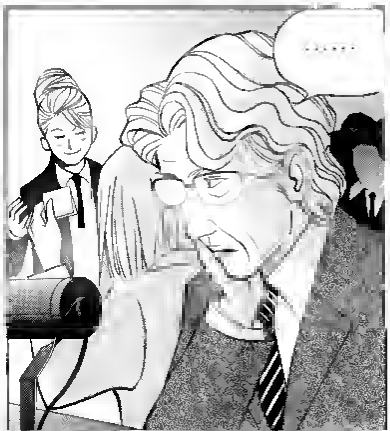
This is really weird, isn't it?!
Why did they eliminate Adamski but let this guy stay?!
Unacceptable, right...?
.....
Simon Hausner (Journalist from "Tablizer")
We really can't justify why we've chosen these contestants over Adamski.
Their scores were all right in the first round, but...
That Gardocki just now was simply atrocious.
Even though he's got a lot of fans...

Ah... He's Anna Bilinska's student...
ANNA BILINSKA

Perhaps there really is some kind of arrangement among the judges.

A judge can't take part in adjudicating their own students, so the scores won't be biased.
That's what appears to be the case, but...

I finally have the time to come.
At least show me something decent...


.....

To be able to watch the competition with you in such a leisurely manner is good enough a reason.
You really lost for no reason...
Haha, don't say that.
35
I've always been a big fan of hers.
Ahh... I see.
Besides, the next one is the reason why I came today!

No.1 in G Minor;
Her set list is...
Mazurkas, Op.24
No.2 in C Major;
No.3...
You think she can beat China's Pang too?
Yep!
I, for one, would have no complaint at all if she wins the competition!
Her piano of choice is Steinway
No.35
Sonata No.3 in B minor, Op.58
Wanna bet?
You're on.

Allegra
Granados,
Argentina.

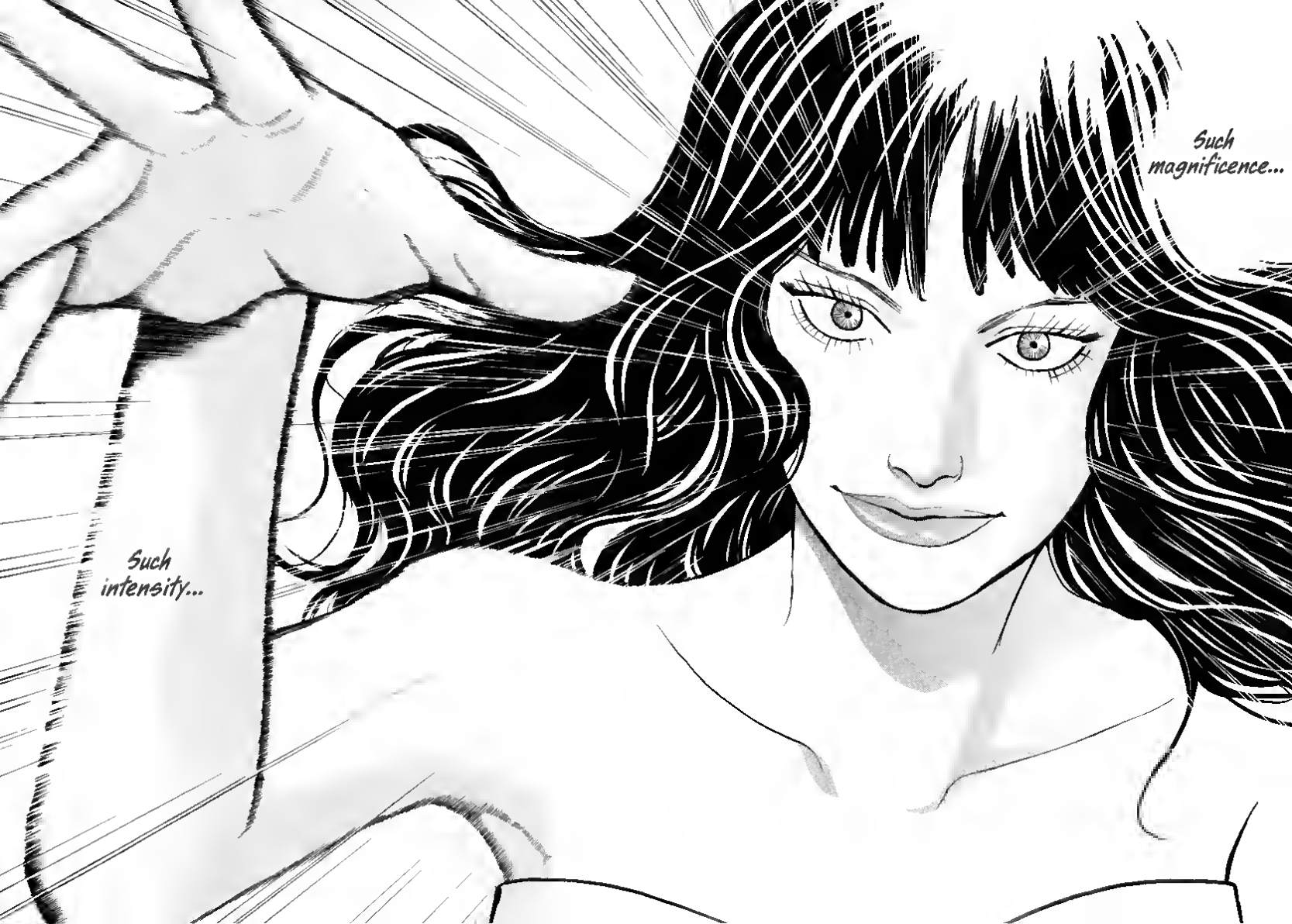
キャー
He...Hey Victoria!
What... I'm a fan!
Boobs.
Boobs.
STEINW

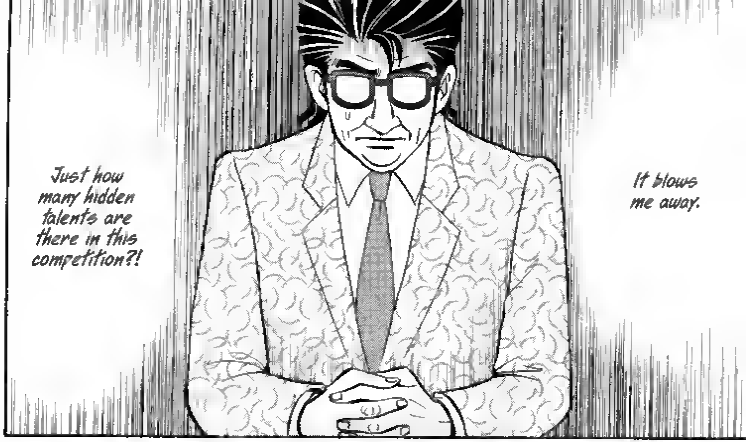
This...

She starts her performance with Mazurkas Op.24...

Andante spianato et Grande Polonaise brillante...
Finalists.
This makes 6...
Next on her list is...

Looms over me like the brilliance of a gem-stone...
Her music...
Then, her Sonata No.3 / gives off...


Such magnificence...
Such intensity...


Just how many hidden talents are there in this competition?!
It blows me away.

There's nothing here for me to be cocky about though!
Not that I understand all that Polish...
Don't be too cocky over this kind of article, Shuhei!

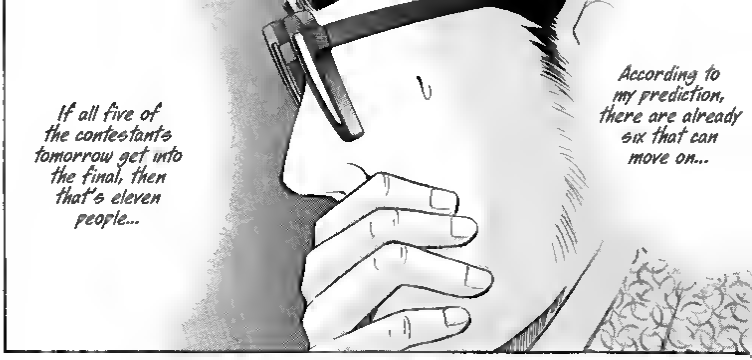
Haha...
I've heard rumors, but seriously, this has to be against the rules.
It wasn't just goose-bumps... I was chilled to the bone.
Ahh... I haven't had such a shock in quite some time...

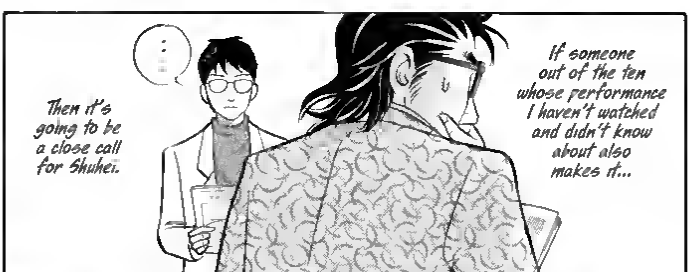
Yeah. Kai will be playing.
Then there'll be the nerve-wrecking release of the results...

You'll go, right?
Shuhei! Tomorrow is the final day of the second round...

Twelve contestants will enter the final...

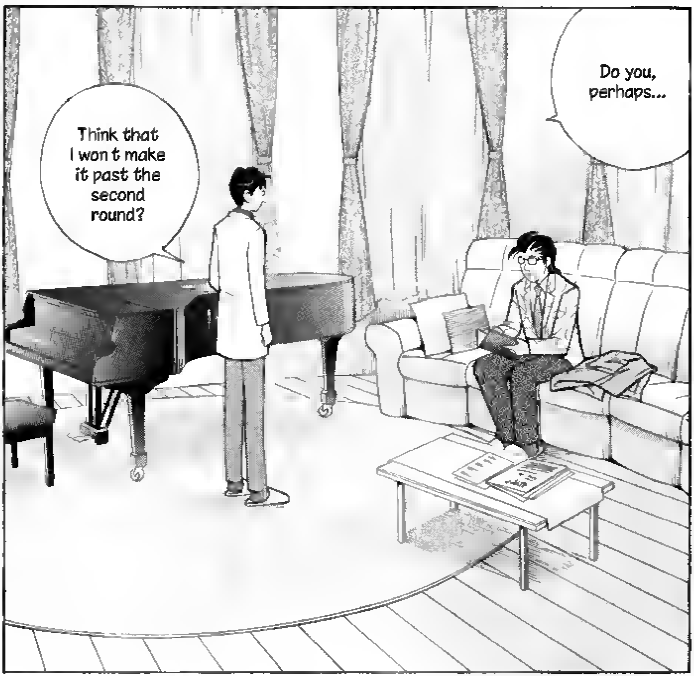
The performances will end at 3... There'll be 2 hours of deliberation...
Indeed... There are only five contestants tomorrow...


If all five of the contestants tomorrow get into the final, then that's eleven people...
According to my prediction, there are already six that can move on...


Then it's going to be a close call for Shuhei.
If someone out of the ten whose performance I haven't watched and didn't know about also makes it...

But... In a one-in-a-million chance...
flip
flip
That's not very probable...
Will all five of the last contestants become finalists...?
flip
flip

CONTESTANTS ON THE FINAL DAY
flip
NO.36
DANIEL HUNT
(USA)
Father!
flip
NO.54
LECH SZYMANOWSKI
(POLAND)
NO. 3
CHANG-SOO AN
(SOUTH KOREA)
flip
flip
NO.44
SATORU MUKAI
(JAPAN)
NO.37
KAI ICHINOSE
(JAPAN)
flip
flip



Anxiety / Distrust END

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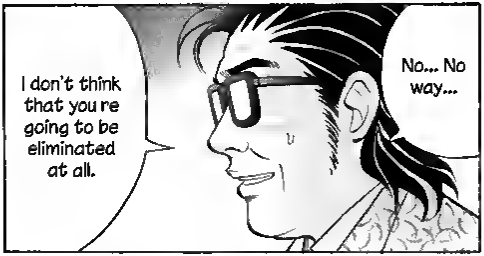
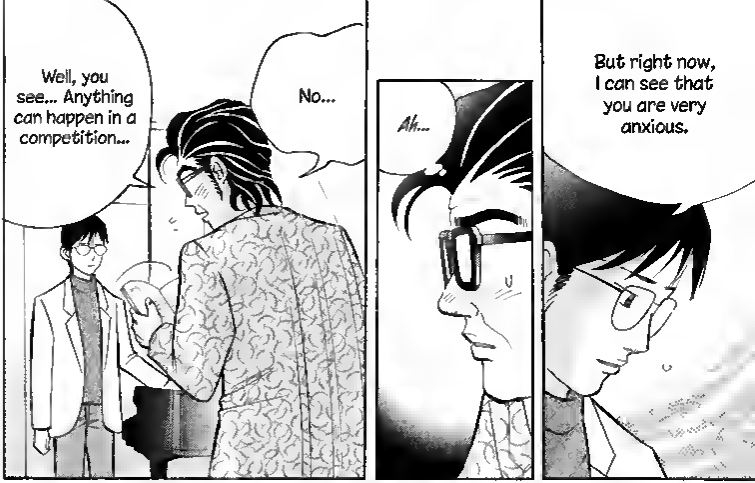
Eh?

Really?


I don't think that you're going to be eliminated at all.
No... No way...

I wouldn't ...
I don't even want to think that!
I'm just feeling a bit uneasy!!
I...I wouldn't think that!


Well, you see... Anything can happen in a competition...
No...
Ah...
But right now, I can see that you are very anxious.

...Since that was my best performance so far.
But I don't think I'm going to be eliminated...
Just like Adamski...
Yeah, that's true.

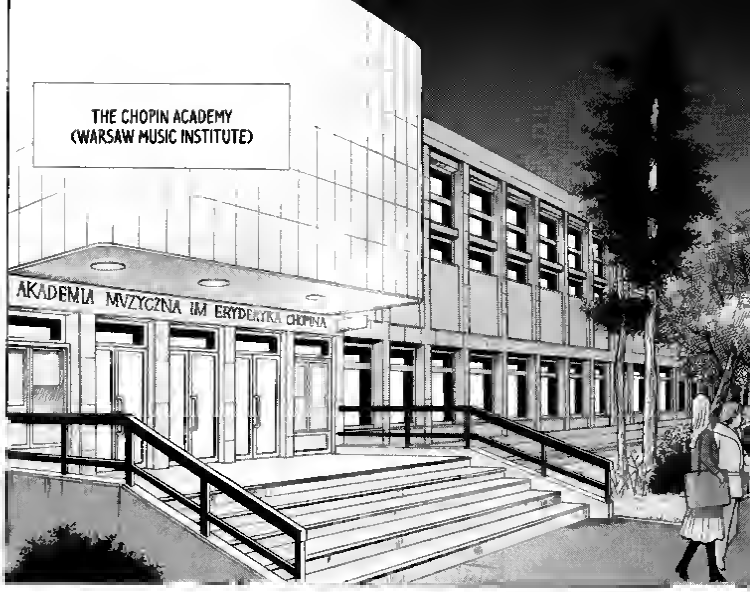
Not a word of praise, and not mentioning it in any way. It even seems like he's avoiding the topic! Why?!
But the fact that Father doesn't seem to be touched at all is making me nervous.

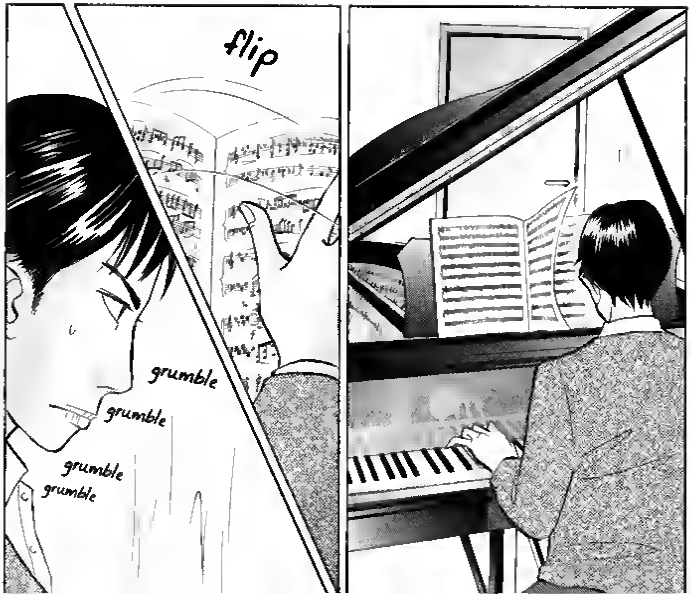
Ah well, I was surprised by Granados' performance today...
flip
And I was just checking the performers list to make sure there won't be any unanticipated situation since it is the final day of the second round tomorrow...

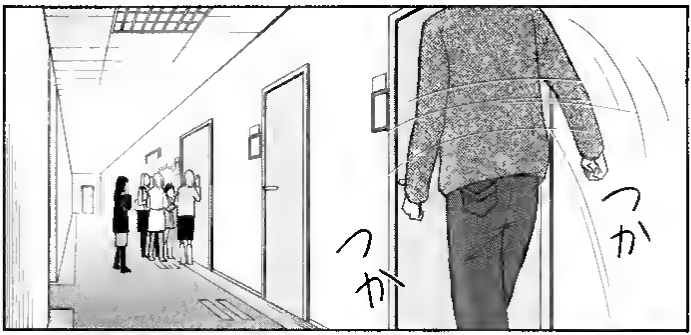
Hmm?
Father.

Is Kai.
You don't have to worry about that, because the only one that does unexpected things...

Chapter 165
The Day Before


THE CHOPIN ACADEMY
(WARSAW MUSIC INSTITUTE)
AKADEMIA MUZYCZNA IM FRYDERYKA CHOPINA


flip
grumble
grumble
grumble
grumble


つか
つか

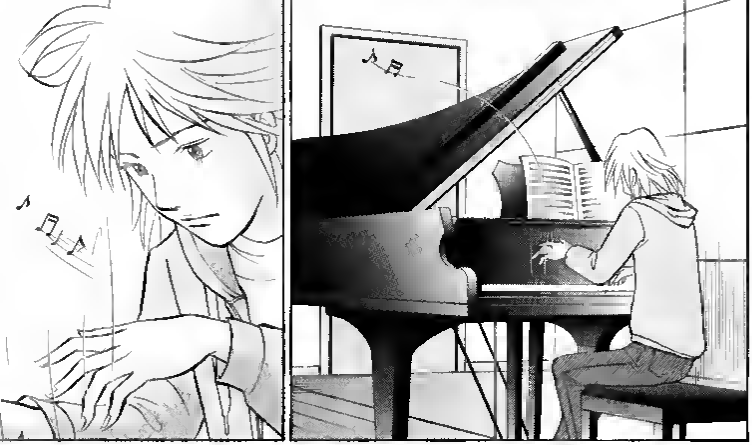
Please let us concentrate on our practice!
Do you understand how important tomorrow is to us?

Excuse me, everyone.

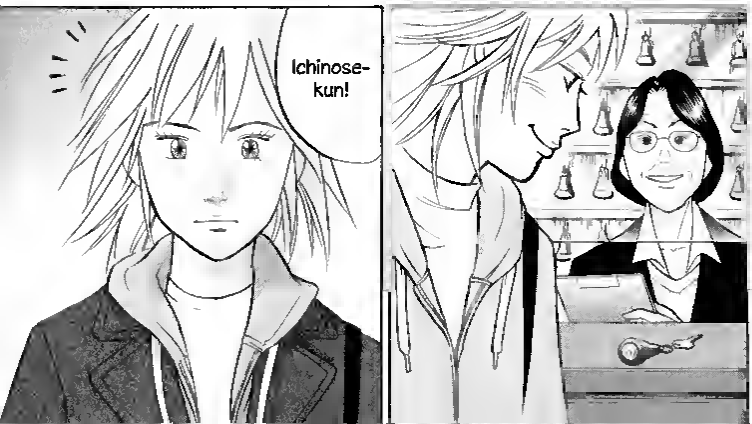
…
ゾロゾロ

325
♫♪

……
♫♪
17:00～15:00
15:00～16:00
16:00～17:00
17:00～18:00
18:00～19:00
19:00～20:00
20:00～21:00
Kai Ichinose



RECEPTION

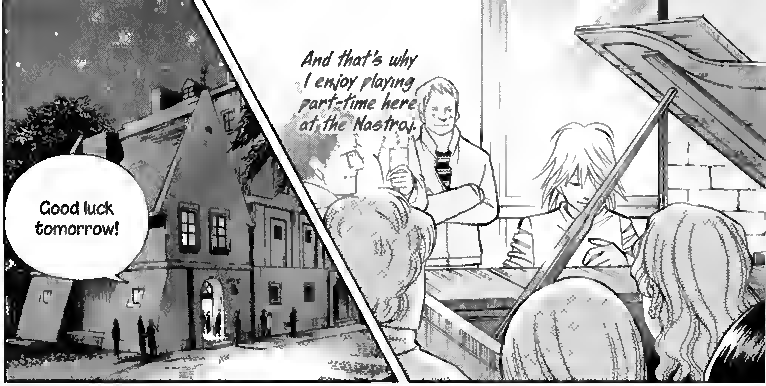

Ichinose-kun!

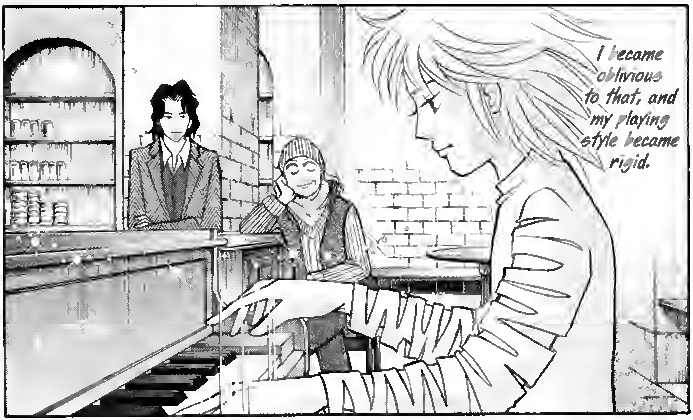
Sorry I surprised you!
AKADEMIA
My name is Mukai Satoru.
I'm also performing in the second round tomorrow.
Nice to meet you!
Tomorrow... Nerve-wrecking, isn't it?
Yeah.
Was this your first time practising here?
Yep.
The rooms were fully booked during the preliminaries and the first round...
Yeah, this is my first time seeing you here...
There were people crowding outside your room listening to you practise, you know!

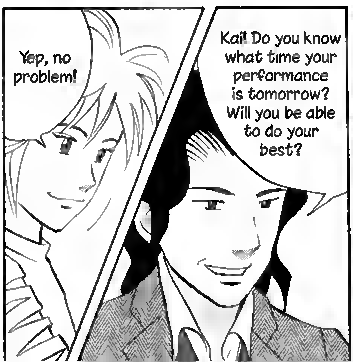
I don't know about you... But I wasn't able to concentrate.
Huh?
I couldn't concentrate so I drove them away.
Though she didn't make it through the first round...
My girlfriend is also a contestant. I met her when I first came to Warsaw...
It's because my new girlfriend was in the crowd.
...Super captivating!
Ichinose-kun, your playing in the 1st round was just super super super super super super...
AKADEMIA

I'm so sorry!
That's not what I'm trying to do at all!
S... Sorry! Am I stressing you out?
Ah...
Everybody wants to listen to your piano!
Thank you for your words of encouragement!
Eh? Really?
That's not it! I...I'm playing the piano because I want more people to listen to it... If what you say is true, I'll be overjoyed!
Yeah! Of course!
Let's both try our best tomorrow!

I wonder if he was frank or just insensitive...
Ehh... Funny how it turned out...
But he doesn't seem like a bad guy
I now remember...
NASTRÓJ
I play the piano because I want people to listen...


Good luck tomorrow!
And that's why I enjoy playing part-time here at the Nastro.


I became oblivious to that, and my playing style became rigid.


Yep, no problem!
Kai! Do you know what time your performance is tomorrow? Will you be able to do your best?

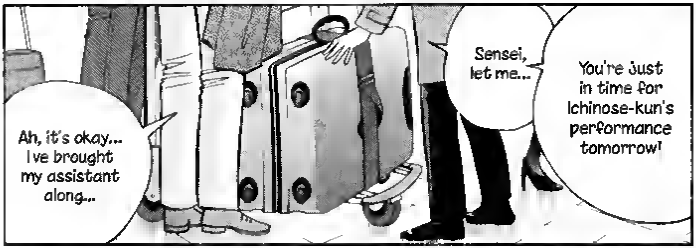
It's a great piece!
Yep, it's good!

Who might it be?
Hello?
Unknown caller
?
Oh, Kai. Your phone's flashing.
Nashimoto?
The physician specializing in treating hands...?
Ah... Nashimoto-sensei?
You're calling from Tokyo?
Huh?!
Making sure that my performance is tomorrow?
Beep
It's all right.
Right!
Yes?

PRZYLOTY

Ah... Nakao-sensei!!!!

Can hardly believe what I'm doing.
Even I myself...
I just couldn't believe it!
Ahhh... thank goodness! I just couldn't believe that I get to spend time with you here in Warsaw until I saw you just now...


Ah, it's okay... I've brought my assistant along...
Sensei, let me...
You're just in time for Ichinose-kun's performance tomorrow!

Oh... Very well...
Of course! I even called to confirm it while waiting for you!
Are you sure that Ichinose is performing tomorrow?
More importantly, Nashimoto-kun,

Eh?
Nashimoto-kun, haven't you been listening to what people say?
Sensei! What do you think about Ichinose-kun's last performance?
That's why I have rearranged my busy schedule and come all the way to Warsaw just to listen to him play. I did tell you to make time and come with me, didn't I?!
The network connection was so unstable it kept disconnecting... so I couldn't listen to it properly...
You're in for a surprise when you listen to it live!
Ah... That's right, that's right!

Are your hands all right?
Speaking of which, Kai...
Huh?
And when did you hurt your finger?
Of...
Of course!

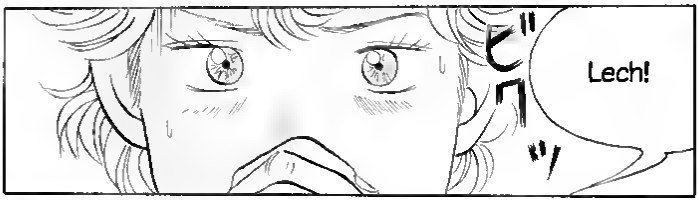
Four months ...
Five months ago!
...ago.
....
FILHARMONIA
SECOND ROUND FINAL DAY

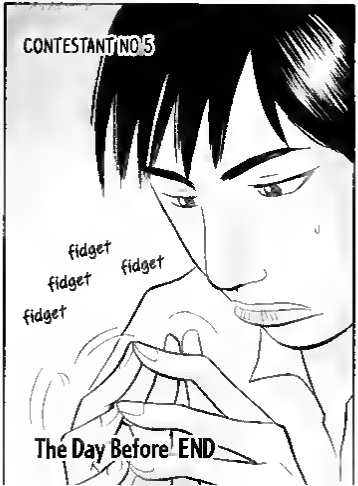
With the same unique style he displayed in the 1st round.
The first contestant, Daniel Hunt (USA) played...
However...
.....
And succeeded in stirring a wave of excitement among the audience.
This time, he played with a force that was on a whole new level compared to the first round...

His performance is completely different from his younger brother's...
The second contestant, Chang Soo An (South Korea)...
But it's no less dazzling...

Finally, the next one...
The long-awaited new star of Poland... Lech Szymanowski!

It's going to be your turn very soon, sir!!


Lech!


CONTESTANT NO 5
fidget
fidget
fidget
fidget
fidget
The Day Before END

CONTESTANT NO 4
buzz
buzz
buzz
buzz
buzz

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PIANO NO MORI

by ISSHIKI Makoto
一色まこと

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Artwork from "Gu...rding".

Chapter 166

Poland's Chopin!

What can it be?
buzz buzz buzz
buzz buzz buzz buzz
A fly?
A bee?
buzz buzz buzz buzz
buzz buzz buzz
Whoa whoa whoa whoa
What the heck...
Ok I get it. I'm leaving!

I finally got to relax, surrounded by the nice atmosphere of the forest...
Really, what's the rush...

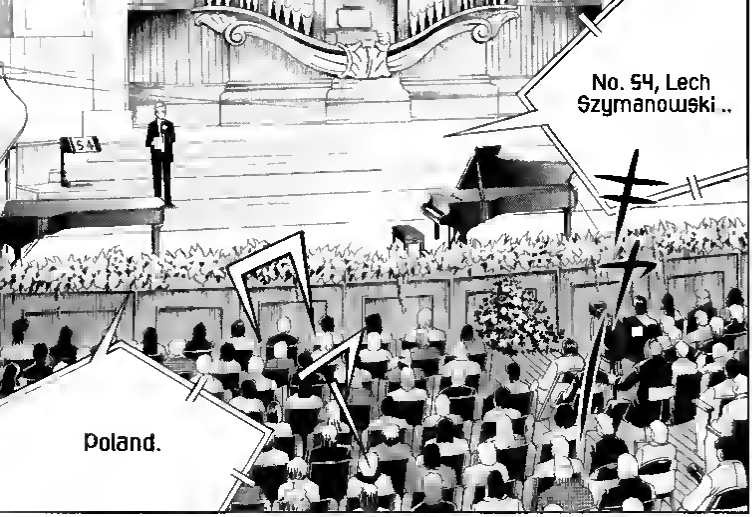
buzz
buzz
I was about to go to the venue in any case!
PHILHARMONIC HALL

ざわざわ
It's going to be your turn soon. Good luck!

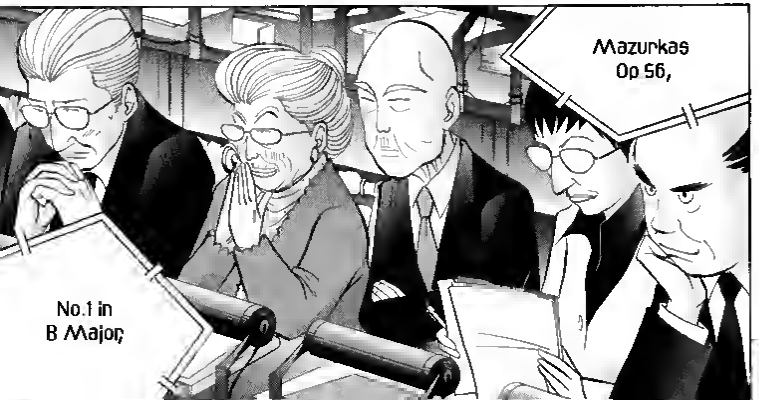
It's... It's alright!
Lech!
Today... everything will be alright!
グッ

Yeah, I'm fine!
Lech, are you alright?
Are you listening, Lech?
Nothing will go wrong today!
Because Amelia told me this morning, "You're definitely gonna nail it today."
I'm not lying. You don't believe me?
. . . . . .

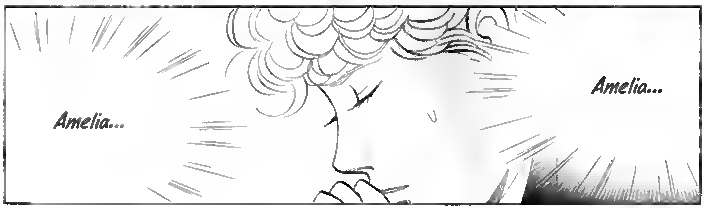
I'm using Amelia to protect myself from Dad...
Since she only talks to me.
Dad goes quiet whenever I mention Amelia...
smile
Since that's what she taught me to do.
Sure.
So play wonderfully today, okay?
I do believe you.
Our third contestant is...


No. 54, Lech Szymanowski ..
Poland.

His pieces of choice are Polonaise No.6
In A Flat Major, Op.53, "Heroic",


Mazurkas Op.56,
No.1 in B Major,

No.3 in
C Minor,
No.2 in
C Major,


Amelia...
Amelia...

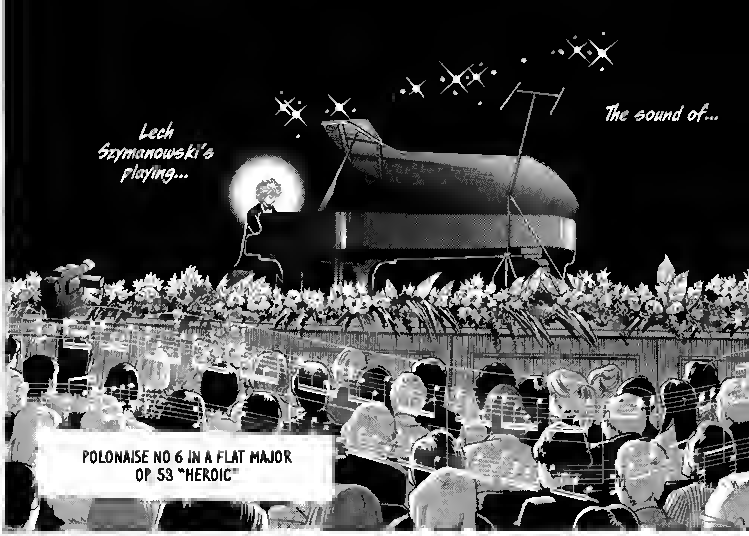
Even though I'm not around, you still managed to win all sorts of competitions, right?
Lech, everything's going to be alright.

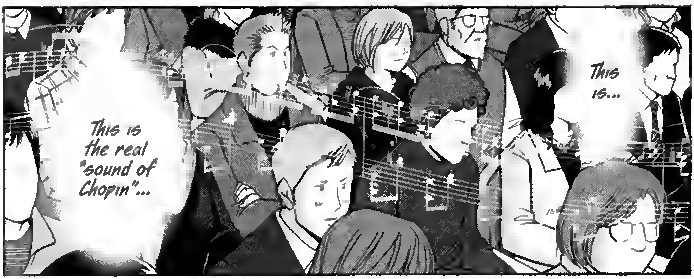
You may not be known internationally for now...
But if you win this competition, you're going to be instantly pushed into the limelight!
I won because those were just small national competitions. It's an international one this time.
Very much so!
Will that make you happy?
Sonata No.3 in B Minor, Op.58.
His piano of choice is Steinway

Lech Szymanowski,
Poland!
It was you, Amelia, who was supposed to be standing on this stage...
And these cheers were meant for you.

Amelia.
That's why I'm here to play in your stead!
Otherwise...

Would there be any purpose to my life...
Nor...
There would be no meaning in your self-sacrifice for me...


Lech Szymanowski's playing...
The sound of...
POLONAISE NO 6 IN A FLAT MAJOR OP 53 "HEROIC"


This is the real "sound of Chopin"...
This is...

That this is truly "Poland's Chopin."
This piano is convincing us all!..

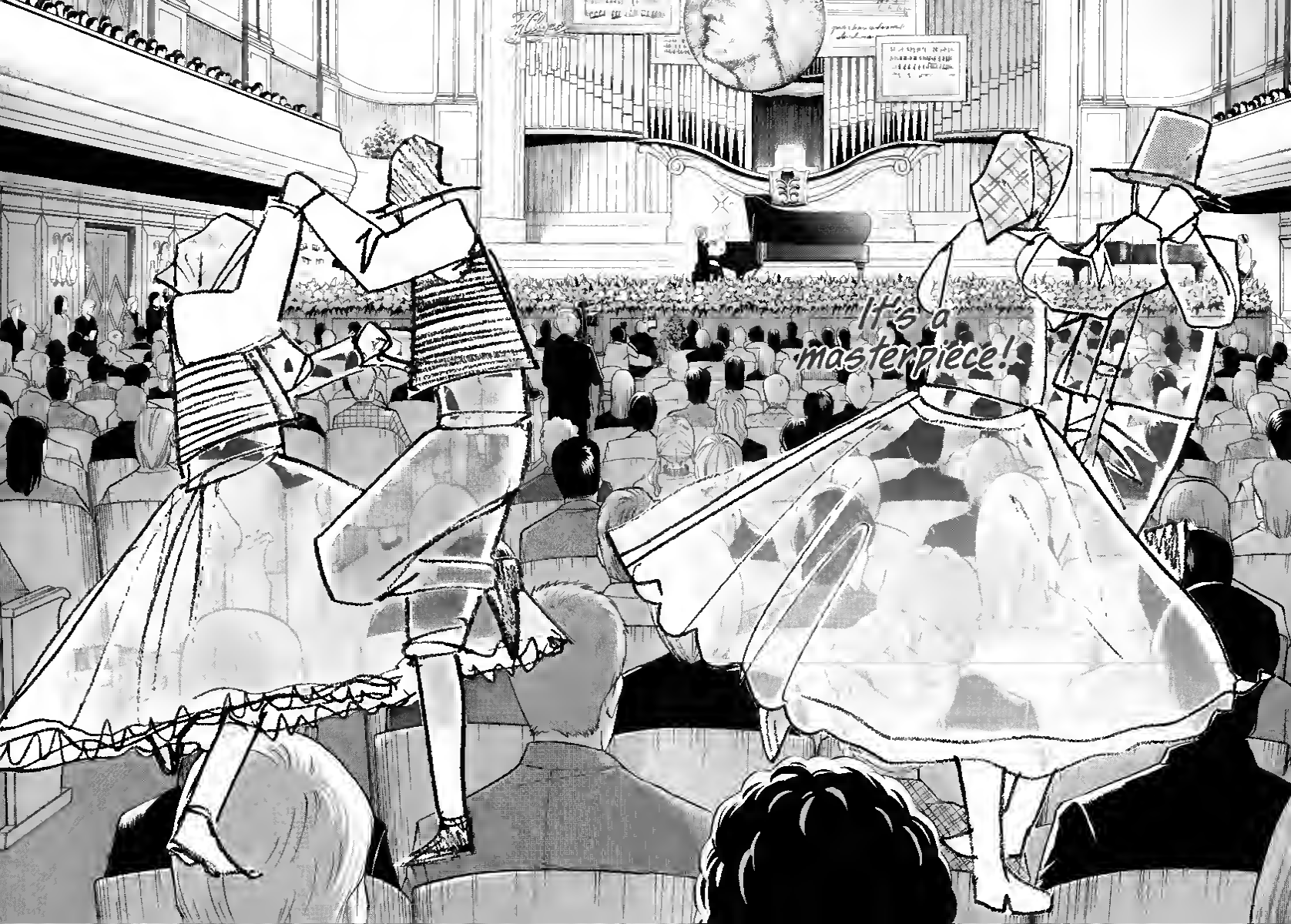
And graceful performance.
Such a noble...

This is...

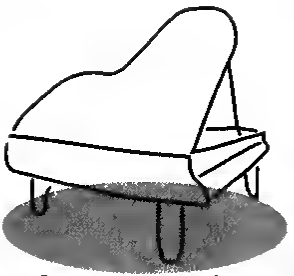
...Our long awaited Chopin!!

Wow...
This is the exemplary ideal of Chopin's piano, isn't it?
No, it's more than that!
This guy is good...
He's playing even better than in the first round.
Such a soothing performance...
To be able to play "Heroic" so well even without making it belligerent...

In his subsequent mazurkas...
But also hear their heavy sighs lamenting their poverty...
I can see the figures of Polish peasants dancing merrily with each other.


It's a masterpiece!

This is the Chopin of Poland!
Poland's Chopin! END



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To be continued in Volume 19

下田コラム

*SHIMODA COLUMN

The Dance Music of Chopin's Homeland: The Mazurka and the Polonaise

WRITER, SHIMODA KOJI, MUSIC CRITIC, PIANIST

Chopin has written a lot of dance music. His "Little Dog Waltz" was the first of many waltzes and other pieces of dance music, including his "Tarantelle" and "Boléro". Even the origin of his famous ballades was not completely unrelated to dancing. Upon closer inspection, you'll see that they all originated from his home country, Poland, with its two folk dances, the Mazurka and the Polonaise.

There's a saying in Poland: "Chopin started his composing with a Polonaise and ended with a Mazurka." His first work was indeed a Polonaise and his final one indeed a Mazurka, but that isn't all there is to the matter. While Poland was under the rule of another country, 20-year-old Chopin left Poland for the second time and found himself unable to return, yet he kept composing a large amount of Mazurkas and Polonaises even during his exile. Thus, this saying in fact refers to Chopin's unyielding Polish pride.

It is difficult for people to thoroughly comprehend a Polonaise or a Mazurka upon hearing it. For the Japanese people, there is little chance to watch these dances, much less to participate in them, as opposed to the more prevalent waltz. But still, most of the contestants of the Chopin Competition aiming for the final round, like Kai, the protagonist of "Piano no Mori", would choose to play the Mazurka and Polonaise. I believe that being familiar with the actual dance steps is highly conducive to visualizing the pieces when performing them.

What are the Mazurka and Polonaise dances like, then? Though it'd be better to see for yourself than to listen to hearsay, I'll try to explain them as best as I can.

The Mazurka is actually an 'umbrella term' for the Mazur, the Oberek and the Kujawiak. These are all dances of the Polish peasantry, and they all feature couples doing a variety of spins. Here are their similarities:

① There is an accent on the 2nd or 3rd beat.

② $\frac{3}{4}$ + ♩ ♩ The women's steps end on a beat like this (On a weak beat instead of a strong one)

Descriptions of the dance music and their respective steps are stated in the table below. They may not vary much in this regard, but they are all different and unique. Chopin created about 60 brilliant pieces by contrasting, and sometimes combining, the characteristics of these dances. He then gathered three or four pieces and piled them into a single opus, taking the flow of melody into great consideration. You can also see the Mazurkas' influence in some of Chopin's other works.

The Polonaise, on the other hand, is easier to interpret. It started off as a celebratory dance popular among peasants and city dwellers, and eventually found its way among aristocrats. The dancers all face forward, with the men on the left and the women on the right, holding hands while advancing in this rhythm:

$\frac{3}{4}$ ♫♩♫♩ ... and, $\frac{3}{4}$ + ♬♩♪ 𝄾 The women's steps end on a beat like this.

Chopin has written 16 solo piano pieces, 1 cello-piano duet, and 1 orchestral piece for the Polonaise. You can also observe the influence of the Polonaise in many of his other works.

If ballades, scherzos, and sonatas are to be described as Chopin's 'formal attire', then the Mazurka and the Polonaise can be seen as his 'everyday outfits'. This is the music that has been steeped into his flesh and soul from growing up in his home country. You would probably be more familiar with some of his famous Polonaises such as "Heroic", "Military Polonaise", and "Polonaise-Fantaisie". On the other hand, his Mazurkas are extremely deep, abstruse even. From his earliest pieces to the later masterpieces, his Mazurkas have always contained the uniqueness and characteristics of Poland. Therefore, I think Chopin's Polonaises and Mazurkas are both masterpieces which deserve more appreciation, portrayals, and adoration.

	KUJAWIAK	MAZUR	OBEREK
TEMPO	Slow ◂ · · ·

"Piano no Mori" Music Terminology Notes

CHAPTER 161
CANTABILE
As if one were singing.
Not dull at all. Instead, it is a really exciting performance where one plays like they were singing their heart out.

CHAPTER 161
RUBATO
Means "stolen" in Italian.
It is hard to express feelings with just notes. You would also need to slightly alter the tempo depending on your emotions. Quicken the pace a bit (stealing tempo), and then slow down again (returning the tempo). Hence the name.

CHAPTER 161
MELANCHOLY
Sadness.
Slavic melodies are often melancholic. There's a distinct flow of melancholy coursing through Chopin's Mazurkas, which is regarded as one of their most defining characteristics, and brings us moments of indescribable beauty.

CHAPTER 162
PASSAGE
Bridge.
A group of notes shifting upwards or downwards, for example, in the form of scales or arpeggios.

CHAPTER 166
NOBLE
In a noble fashion.
In music, it means the performance isn't rusty or rough. Rather, the performer puts their soul into the instrument and play it with grace and elegance.

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一色まこと

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